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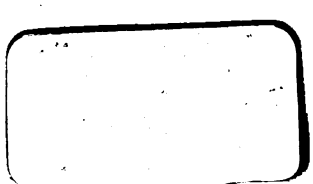

AN ESSAY

ON

THE DRUIDS,

THE ANCIENT CHURCHES

AND

THE ROUND TOWERS

OF IRELAND.

BY

THE REV. RICHARD SMIDDY.

"*Antiquam exquirite matrem.*"
"Search out the ancient mother."
VIRGIL.

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1871.

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Dedication.

TO THE CELTIC RACE, ALL OVER THE WORLD,

THE FOLLOWING ESSAY

IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED

BY

THE WRITER.

PREFACE.

WHATEVER may be the character of the following Essay, it is the result of considerable study and inquiry. In the first place, the subjects of which it treats could never be approached without a knowledge of the Celtic language. That, in itself, would require the labour and application of much time. There are, and have been, distinguished antiquaries in Ireland who could not pronounce a single sentence in the Irish language. Yet, to know that language well, without being able to speak it, is an utter impossibility; for it is essentially more a language of the tongue than of the letter.

It was once the speech of a vast number of the human race. Probably, it was the first language spoken by man. At the present day fragments of it are found in most countries of the world, even in India and among the original tribes of America. No language has left more extensive traces of its existence on the face of Europe than

the Celtic. It is indelibly engraved there in the names of rivers, cities, lakes, and mountains, as well as in the frame-work of the modern languages. Perhaps, even, imperial Rome itself owes its name to it, whatever ancient writers may say on the subject. In the Celtic language Ruimineach means a swamp, or marsh, a feature which, certainly, ancient Roma exhibited, and of which there remain clear traces to this day. It is an incontrovertible fact that the old languages of Rome and Greece drew largely on the Celtic for their component materials.

This ancient tongue is now on the point of dying out, even in Ireland which was its last resting place, just as, centuries ago, it disappeared in other countries under the dissolving influence of invasion and the introduction of foreign lingual elements. The language to which the ancient Bards strung their harps, and which flowed with such grace from the lips of fair lady, brave chief, and Druidical sage, is now soon about to take its departure for ever. This, in itself, may be a reason for endeavouring to raise even an humble monument out of it before it disappears altogether. Without its assistance the subject of the Druids could never be ade-

quately handled, the names of the Churches would remain a mystery, and the key to the cipher of the Round Tower would be lost for ever. With respect to these Towers, perhaps the most interesting subject of the Essay, the present theory touches a cord which was never struck before. That it is the true one, the writer is perfectly confident. If it be so, success must not speak or think disparagingly of those who went before it in this inquiry. Nor should obligations be unacknowledged. The progress of the voyage into remote antiquity is often slow and difficult, and, to be successful, requires the light and assistance derived from the labours even of those who have failed in the attempt at discovery themselves.

Aghada, on the Harbour of Queenstown.
April, 1871.

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ESSAY

ON THE

DRUIDS, ANCIENT CHURCHES, AND ROUND TOWERS

OF IRELAND.

CHAPTER I.

THE DRUIDS.

THE DERIVATION AND MEANING OF THE NAME, DRUID.—THE MEANING OF THE NAMES, CELTS AND SCOTS, AND WHAT COUNTRIES THEY ORIGINALLY CAME FROM.—THE MEANING OF THE NAME, GALLUS, OR GAUL.—THE MEANING OF THE NAME, GOTH.—THE LANGUAGE OF THE CELTS.—THE RELIGIOUS SYSTEM OF THE DRUIDS.—THE GODS OF THE DRUIDS.—THE NAMES OF THE GODS GIVEN TO THE DAYS OF THE WEEK, WHICH ARE STILL CALLED AFTER THEM IN THE IRISH AND OTHER LANGUAGES.—HUMAN SACRIFICES OF THE DRUIDS.—THEIR TEMPLES AND ALTARS.—THEIR VOTIVE OFFERINGS OF THE SPOILS TAKEN FROM THE ENEMY.—THE DALLAN, OR PILLAR-STONE.—THE CHIEF SEAT, OR MEETING-PLACE OF THE DRUIDS IN IRELAND.—MONUMENTS OF THE DRUIDS.—THE OGHAM WRITING.—THE LIA-FAIL, CALLED THE STONE OF DESTINY.—THE FOLACH FIADH, OR COOKING TUB.—THE BREWING VAT AND MILL.—THE BRUGH, OR BURYING MOUND.—THE HOUSES AND HABITATIONS OF THE DRUIDS AND CELTS.—THE RATH.—THE LIOS.—THE DUN.—THE TEAMHAIR.—THE CAISOIL.—THE CATHAIR.—THE PALAS.—THE CRO.—THE CRANNOG AND CURACH.

WHEN the first Christian Missionary landed in Ireland he found the Druids and their religion strongly established there. The Druids were the priests of the ancient Celts. The word Druid is formed from the Irish name, *Draoi* (pronounced

Dhree), which is believed to be a compound of the words *dair*, "oak," and *ai*, "learned or wise," that is, the learned or wise man of the oak. The oak was held in great veneration by the Druids. Under its branches, on the mountain tops and in the deep valleys, were performed the rites and mysteries of their religion; and it was in the woods and wilds they and their people sojourned while leading a roving life and subsisting on their flocks, during the early periods of their history.

It appears that the Celts were a branch or colony, sprung from ancient Scythia. A wandering hardy people were the Scythians, who, disdaining to live in cities or towns, moved about from one place to another with their families and their flocks. In the course of ages they spread over a large portion of Asia, and even occupied many countries of Europe.

The name, *Scuit*, "Scots," assumed by these people, was derived from *Sciot*, "an arrow or dart." It appears that, true to their traditions and warlike name, the nobles of that race, on all occasions of public ceremony, always carried the bow and the arrows as a necessary part of their personal outfit. The name of Scythians, which the Greek and Latin writers bestowed on the ancient tribes of this race, was derived from the same root. The Scots of Ireland and Scotland were called *Scoti* in modern Latin.

A large territory on the eastern and western

shores of the Euxine, in Asia, and in Europe, obtained the name of Scythia, from the presence there, for many ages, of an early colony of this warlike race. Herodotus states that they had come there from the borders of the Red Sea, from which, according to other authorities, they had been expelled by one of the Pharoahs for their kindness to the oppressed Israelites. Josephus says, they were the descendants of Magog, son of Japheth, son of Noah. His words are :—"Magog led out a colony which, from him, were called Magogites, but by the Greeks called Scythians."

Among the first important colonies of these hardy Scythians, was that which they planted in ancient Phœnicia, a country situated in Asia, on the eastern shores of the Mediterranean. Here the Scythian intellect found employment in trade and commerce, and the arts of civilized life, which were pushed with wonderful energy by them to all parts of the then known world. By this means new colonies, sprung from the Scythian blood, were planted at Carthage, Hippo, Marseilles, Utica, and other places favourable to commerce. The Celts of Ireland claimed a brotherhood with all those descended from Phœnicia, and in consequence of that claim, one of the names assumed by them was that of *Feinné*, or *Fianaidhe* (Fenii, or Fenians), just as the name *Peni* or *Pheni*, was given to the Carthaginians, from the same root, Phœnicus, or Phœnician.

Phœnicia means the country of the Phœnians or Fenians; but it is not absolutely known what is the root or meaning of the word Phœnian itself. Some think it is derived from the Celtic word *Feiné*, "a warrior" or husbandman, while some of the Greek and Latin writers say it came from Phœnix, one of their kings, or perhaps from the Greek word *Phoinikes*, palm trees, which were very abundant in their country. It is, however, more likely that the word is of Celtic origin, and that Feiné, a warrior, is the root of it. Thus Sciot and Feiné would mean the same thing, that is, a person expert at hurling the dart, according to the first name, and a warrior according to the other. It is likely that the ancient Irish militia, of which Fionn MacCubhail was a prominent commander, took the name of Feinné or Fhianaidhe, from this word, which indicated a high and distinguished origin of the Celtic race in Ireland.

The Druidical nations were designated by the general name of Celtæ or Celts. By the ancient Greek and Roman writers this term is applied to the descendants of a powerful and warlike people, whose known origin is traced to the eastern and western shores of the Euxine, in Asia and in Europe. It is not known whether the word Celtæ (originally and properly pronounced *Keltæ*), was of foreign invention, or whether it was formed from a name which, in their own language, these people had assumed and applied to

themselves. Some derive it from Celsus, a great personage, on whose character and origin the ancient writers are not agreed. Others derive it from *Geilt*, which means a wild man or inhabitant of the woods. *Coill* is a wood, and *coiltach*, an inhabitant of the woods. In certain cases of the plural number, *coiltach* changes to *gailtig*, or *geiltig;* and hence, it is said, was formed the name Celtæ, bestowed on these people. But if the word is to be regarded as of native origin, it is scarcely credible that a proud and powerful people would have applied to themselves the character of wild men of the woods.

Another interpretation, more flattering to the pride of this ancient race, is not without its advocates and its plausibility. Cæsar says the Celts believed that they were born of the Deity, or descended from God as their father, and that this belief was handed down to them by the Druids. We shall hereafter see that in Ireland they were called by the name of Tuatha-De-Danan, that is, the princes or descendants of Dia-tene-ion (god the fire-god), by which was meant the sun. In the Celtic language *ceal* (pronounced *kal*) means the heavens, and *ceallach*, or *cealtach*, signifies a person of the heavens, or a heavenly person. Here, then, in the word *cealtach*, a heavenly person, we have the root of the name Celtæ, given to these people by the ancient Greek and Latin writers. The name by

which the Irish have always called themselves is Gaoidhiel, or Gaoidhallagh, a word which is pronounced with perfect accuracy by the Irish-speaking people of this country, but the sound of which cannot be adequately conveyed in any combination of English letters or words. It is not Geeal, nor Geelloach, but something in that direction, which the pen alone could never produce. Now, Gaoidhallagh appears to be formed from *gaol*, "a relative," and *ceallagh*, "a person of the heavens," or heavenly, that is, a relative of the celestials, or, in other words, of the Celts. This interpretation is strengthened by the authority of those very ancient writers, who say that the word Celtæ came from Celsus, who was descended from Cœlus or Uranus. Uranus seems to be formed from the Celtic words *Ur*, "the sun," and *An*, "man." The words Kelleach, Keltæ, and Kelsus, are evidently of the same root and family.

If this be the true interpretation of the name, it asserts a high and honourable origin for the Celts; and it is difficult to say who may not participate in the honour, for the descendants of that great race are scattered over many of the countries of the globe. It also establishes the inference that there is something more than a poetic licence in the language which calls these children of the sun, "fiery Celts." Possibly those nations that preserved and fostered traditions of their own celestial or divine origin, such as the

native Peruvians, the Chinese, and also the Athenians, or ancient Greeks, according to the words of their poets, as quoted by St. Paul, were early distant branches, springing from the great *Cealtach*, or Celtic root. The celestial mother of the Peruvians, whose name and memory their tradition preserved, was called in their language *Mama Oello.* How much this resembles the Celtic words *Mam Ceallach*, "heavenly mother!" *Mama*, in the Peruvian language, means "mother." In the Celtic it is *Mam;* in the Hebrew *Am.* The Mexicans, Peruvians, and most of the American tribes, were worshippers of the sun; and among them were found many fragments of the Celtic language.

The Latin word Gallus, a Gaul, was manifestly derived from the Celtic name Gaoidhallach, which, according to this very plausible interpretation, means a relative or descendant of the Celestials or Celts. In Ireland the word Gall, or Galluv, means foreigners. This by some is derived from the Latin Galli, Gauls, or inhabitants of France. It is, however, formed from the Celtic words *gal*, or *gael*, "kindred," and *all*, "foreign," that is, of the tribe of the strangers or foreigners, just as Gaoidhael means "of the tribe of the Celestials," or Celts. In Ireland the word Gall was applied to foreigners in general, and settled, in a particular manner, on Gallic foreign invaders, because the Danes or North-

men, who had founded a settlement in France, or ancient Gaul, often at one period sent hostile expeditions from that country to Ireland. The fond name of Goadhael was, however, shared with the kindred nations of Scotland, Wales, and even England, till this last country became either the nursery or the high road of the invader, and then its people were called by the general appellation of Gall, or Gaulliv. In later times the English have been called Sasson or Sassonig. The Scotch Albanig, and the Welsh Breanig.

It would appear that the name Goth is a corruption or inflection of the word Scuit. By the ancient writers the Goths are called Getæ. They comprised the innumerable tribes who inhabited the northern countries of Europe, and who afterwards flowed in on the Roman Empire with irresistible impetuosity. Their gods were the gods of the ancient Scots, or Scythians, and their religious monuments are the same, even as far as the Polar regions. Whatever difference of character and of civilization existed between them, the Scots and the Goths had the same religious ideas, and were distinguished by the same love of arms, of travel, and of adventure.

The language of the Celts, the first perhaps spoken by man, is still living in Ireland. It is soft, copious, and highly expressive and remark-

able for its great capability of forming beautiful compounds from its primitive roots. The Celtic language, according to certain authorities, is a dialect of the Phœnician tongue, and the Phœnician was a near relative of the Hebrew. But there are some grave writers and scholars who think that the Celtic and Phœnician languages are older than the Hebrew, are richer and more natural, both in primitive roots and in compounds, and, as having suffered less from foreign admixture and subjugation, come nearer to man's primitive tongue. The close analogy between the Hebrew and the Irish is very remarkable, both in the construction of the languages and in the words. It is notorious that the Celtic language formed the chief root of the Greek and Latin tongues. From Phœnicia Cadmus brought the sixteen letters of the alphabet, and the Irish language, too, originally possessed only sixteen letters.

This was the language spoken by the Druids, and in it, from time immemorial, they performed the mysteries of their religion, instructed the youth in the secrets of their worship, communicated their own knowledge of the arts and sciences to their pupils, and promulgated law and justice among their people.

In Ireland there is no existing written record or monument from which we could learn the religious system of the Druids, and it is most probable

that no such record ever existed. How comes this? In the first place, it was an inviolable principle with the Druids never to commit their religious tenets or belief to writing, though they wrote on all other matters concerning themselves and their people. In the next place, it was the aim and policy of the early Christian missioners to withdraw the minds of their converts from that system to which the people of the country had been so long devoted, and to allow the stern and still dreaded belief, with its worship, to sink, as soon as possible, into oblivion. Thus no early Christian writer here, in all probability, ever occupied his pen with the subject, though, as we shall see, the names of the different seasons of the year, and even of the days of the week, are still of Druidical origin in the Irish language. Highly probable even it is, that any vestiges or remains of Druidism existing in the ancient historical and legal records of Ireland were industriously removed when, at the suggestion of St. Patrick, about the year 438, as the Annals of the Four Masters state, these works were revised and purified by a number of learned antiquaries. It is collected from other sources that three hundred books, tinged with Paganism, were, at this time, consigned to destruction. It is from Roman and Greek Pagan writers, such as Cæsar, Suetonius. Pliny, Strabo, Diogenes, Laertius, and Diodorus Siculus, we gather the prominent features of the

religion and worship of the Druids, as well as a knowledge of the position and authority held by them among their people.

The Druidical religion inculcated a belief in the existence of a Supreme Ruler. The great object of its worship was Beal, which is a compound word formed from *Be*, "is," and *All*, "universal," that is, the universal Is, or the universal Being. The other gods, and even all visible things, were regarded as mere emanations of this great spirit. Another name of Beal in the Celtic is *Alla*, or *Allah*, which seems to be formed from *Ali*, "universal," and *Hea*, a vocal inflection of *Ta*, "is," that is, the universal Is. There seems to be a striking affinity between these Celtic words or names and *Allah*, of the Arabic, and *Eloha* of the Hebrew. And to which of the three languages is priority of root, for this name of God, to be assigned? Apparently to the Celtic. The Parsees of India, whose original native country was Persia, believe, like the ancient Celts, in the existence of a universal Being, whose name is Bugoion, and of whom they entertain similar notions and ideas.

Though Druidism acknowledged a Supreme Being, the system, however, must be regarded as a species of polytheism and idolatry, for it included a belief in many gods, and rendered divine honours to the sun, moon, stars, and planets, and, as it is thought, to many objects

on this earth. The sea, the lake, the wood, the mountain, and the river, with many other striking objects, received the homage and religious veneration of the Druids, for they believed that the Deity associated himself with everything noble, great, and majestic. Thus, it is thought that, by way of eminence, they gave the name of Beal to the sun, which is the source of light and life, and without which all earthly things would be motionless and inanimate. If we are to deduce a logical conclusion from their principles, it would appear that the whole system was a sort of Pantheism, which made almost every object an emblem of the Deity, especially those things which were remarkable for the possession of very good or very bad qualities.

In his Sixth Book of the Gallic War, Cæsar says that Mercury was their favourite god, the object of their special veneration; and, that after him, the honours were rendered to Apollo, Mars, Jove, and Minerva. Of these divinities he says they had much the same notions as the Romans and other nations, by whom they were acknowledged and worshipped. There is a singular confirmation of what Cæsar says respecting the first honours as given to Mercury, in the very name which that divinity has in the Irish language. He is called *Dia-Cead-ion (eeon)*, that is, "god the first lord," or "god the first god." How he obtained that precedence it is not easy to

conjecture, unless it is that, being the patron of strangers and travellers, he was, from time immemorial, invoked by the wandering Scythians, as their guide and protector. "Of him," continues this Roman writer, "they have many images; they regard him as the inventor of the arts, as the guide of the path and of the journey, and as their great aid in the trade of money-making and commerce."

Tacitus, writing of the ancient inhabitants of Germany, says that, "of all the gods the chief object of their worship is Mercury, to whom, on certain days, they hold it lawful to offer human sacrifices."

The names of the gods, as bestowed on the different days of the week in the Irish language, and as still commonly used in this country, are much the same as those mentioned by Cæsar. They are *Dia Sol*, "god the Sun," (Sunday); *Dia Luan*, "god the Moon," (Monday); *Dia Moirt*, "god Mars," (Tuesday); *Dia Cead-ion (eeon)*, "god the first god," *Mercury* (Wednesday); *Dia ard-ion (eeon)*, "god the high god," *Jove* or *Jupiter* (Thursday); *Dia Bean-ion*, "the woman god," *Venus* (Friday); and *Dia Satharn*, "god Saturn," (Saturday).

Dia-Mairt (Mars), is formed from *Dia*, "god," and *mort*, "death;" that is, the god of death and destruction, which is certainly a very appropriate name. From this evidently comes Mars of the

Latins, and perhaps, too, Ares of the Greeks. In the Celtic language Mairta is the name of the month of March, from *mort*, "death," and *ta*, "god." This month was called after the god of battles, perhaps from the circumstance of the military campaign generally commencing at that season of the year, and especially because his worship was then performed with great solemnity.

Satharn (Saturn) is formed from *sadh* (pronounced *saw*), "a long knife or cutter," and *fearan*, "land," for he it was who had instructed mankind in agriculture, and thereby produced the golden age. Thus he is always represented with a pruning knife or scythe in his hand.

In the Irish language, *dia* means a "god," and *dia* also means "a day." *Ion* (pronounced *eeon*), means a "high lord," and sometimes "god, or the sun." The name of *dia* was evidently given to the day as being dedicated to "the god," and the day of the Druids commenced, like that of Hebrews, from the evening. Thus, for instance, Sunday commenced from Saturday evening at sunset; and, as the Scripture expresses it, the evening and morning were one day. When *dia* means "day," as with respect to the days of the week, the name of the divinity is in the genitive case. The names of the seven days are then thus:—*Dia Sul*, "the day of the Sun" (Sunday); *Dia Luain*, "the day of the Moon;" *Dia Mairt*, "the day of Mars;" *Dia Ceadoine*, "the day of the first god;"

Dia Ardione, "the day of the high god;" *Dia Venione* (corruptly Diaaione, or Diauine,) "the day of the woman god" (Venus); and *Dia Sathrain*, "the day of Saturn" (Saturday.) It was from the Celts the Romans, at a comparatively late period of their history, under the reign of the emperors, adopted this computation of time by the week, and bestowed on the days the names of the gods. Dio, who flourished under Severus, says this change took place a little before his own time. It may, perhaps, be not out of place here to observe that the English words King and Queen are derived from the Celtic. English scholars are unable to tell us their roots, or what they originally meant. "King" is formed from *Ceann-ion*, that is, "head high lord:" *Ceann* being "a head," and *ion* (pronounced *eeon*,) "a high lord" in the Celtic language. "Queen" is formed from the original *Bean-ion* or *Ven-ion*, that is "woman high lady." In a depraved sense, in allusion to Venus, *Bean-ion* sometimes meant a woman of free and unsteady morals. This Celtic word *Bean-ion* is the root of Venus of the Latins, as the change from *Bean-ion*, or *Venion*, to Venus is very trifling; and she was the woman by way of excellence.

The Latin words *Deus* and *Dies*, "a day," and also the Greek word *Theos*, "God," are derived from the Celtic *Dia*. The school-boy is taught to derive *Theos* of the Greeks, from *Theo*, "to

run," because his dictionaries and teachers can furnish no better derivation. The name *Dia*, itself, appears to be a variation of *Ta*, pronounced *Thah*, which is apparently the original Celtic name of God. In sound and in meaning *Ta*, of the Celtic, corresponds with *Yah* or *Jah*, "God," or, "the Great I AM," of the Hebrew; for *Ta* means "am or is," God alone having existence by excellence, and of himself. This is a curious coincidence which exhibits the affinity of these *two languages*, and yet leaves it doubtful which of the two is the older or the original one. Could this word *Ta*, "God," have given rise to the ancient mysterious monogram T, *tau*, which some believe to have been of Hebrew, others of Egyptian origin, but which, perhaps, in reality, was Celtic, and belonged to man's primitive language? The trine *Tau*, would, of itself, indicate a Druidical origin; for with the Druids "three" was a mystical number into which almost all things resolved themselves.

The word *Ta* enters into the formation of Tuesday and Thursday of the Saxons. *Tues* is a compound of *Ta*, "god," and *ess* or *aise*, "death;" that is, the god of death or destruction, viz., Mars. *Thor*, or *Thur*, is formed from *Ta*, "god," and *ur*, "fire," that is, the god of fire, or lightning, Jove. But how is *Oudens* or *Wodens* (Wednesday) formed? The rest are easy, with the exception of *Freita*, or Friday. Perhaps

Ouden is formed from *Uadh*, "chief," or "singular," and *Ta*, "god;" for Mercury held the first rank among the gods of the Druidical Celts. *Freita* (Friday) comes from *fear*, "man," *i*, "she," and *ta*, "god," that is, the woman god, Venus. Another derivation would make it from *fear* "man," and *uith* (pronounced *oo*) "udder," that is, the udder-man, or female, and *ta* "god." The English word *woman*, and, perhaps, the Latin name *mulier*, would seem to point to this latter root as the true one. Woman appears to be formed from *uith*, "udder," and *an*, "man;" *mulier* from *uith*, "udder," and *fear*, "man." *Vir*, "man," of the Latin, comes from *fear*, "man," of the Celtic.

Some of the ancient Greek and Latin writers mention Esus, or Essus, as a god of high repute among the Gauls. He is also sometimes called Estar, or Esar. Esus, or Essus, is evidently formed from Essta, the god of death and destruction, that is, Mars, who was the great protector of the Gallic nation. He was specially worshipped about the month of March, which derives its name from him. From him also is derived the name of Easter, as applied to the Paschal time, which always occurs at that season of the year.

The sacrifices of the Druids consisted chiefly of the products of the earth, grain, milk, fruits, and animals. It is also certain that on

solemn occasions, when visited by a famine, hard-pressed by the enemy, or about to enter on some arduous undertaking, they offered up human sacrifices to conciliate the favour or avert the anger of their gods. Malefactors, felons, and even captives of war, were easily disposed of in this way, by a people who had neither a Cayenne, a Botany Bay, nor a convict-hulk to send them to; and perhaps it was a comfort to the poor victims themselves to be told that they were benefiting their friends, while pleasing the deities, by their death. Still innocent victims were not unfrequent, and Diodorus Siculus says that the Phœnicians in this way sometimes offered up a holocaust, or sacrifice, of thirty helpless children together. How far this gloomy and dreadful system prevailed in Ireland is not known; but as the Druids were educated and trained under the same stern rule and discipline, it is likely that their principles and practice were everywhere the same, though, perhaps, as it is to be hoped, occasionally modified by national influences.

Cæsar tells us how these human sacrifices sometimes took place. They constructed gigantic images of osiers and wicker-work, partly filled with inflammable materials, and in the round enormous legs and arms of these hideous effigies living men were enclosed. At the appointed time for the sacrifice, fire was applied to

this structure, and presently the whole mass was enveloped in flame and smoke, and soon reduced to ashes. Over the horrid scene the Druids presided as usual in their official capacity, with great ceremony, using incantations and spells to make the sacrifice more effective in propitiating the god. And so little did these grim spectacles shock the feelings of the people, that many amongst them, of their own free choice, and without any compulsion, offered themselves as victims on such occasions. The Romans endeavoured to abolish or check this barbarous custom, but, generally, their efforts in that way were not of much avail.

Was the burning at the stake, which even in England, and other countries, continued to a late period, a remnant of this? Or was it used against persons on account of offences against religion, because, perhaps, it had been the special punishment with the Druids of impiety to their gods?

Though the Romans endeavoured, as their writers tell us, to restrain the Druids on this point of their worship, they were not themselves without their human sacrifices. "By an ancient law of Romulus," (says Adam, *Roman Antiquities*), persons guilty "of certain crimes such as treachery or sedition, were devoted to Pluto and the infernal gods. In after times, a consul, dictator, or prætor, might devote not only

himself, but any one of the legion, and slay him as an expiatory victim. In the first ages of the republic human sacrifices seem to have been offered annually; and it was not till the year of the city 657, that a decree of the senate was made to prohibit them. Boys used to be cruelly put to death, in the time of Cicero and Horace, for magical purposes."

Among the Jews there were many sacrifices of animals appointed by God himself. Could the perversion among other nations with respect to human sacrifices be the result of a false and erroneous tradition or interpretation of an early revelation or belief regarding the great sacrifice which was to redeem mankind?

The Druids had temples, altars, and sacred places for the performance of their worship. Some of these are still existing in Ireland, and also in England, Scotland, and France. Perhaps in this country we have the most numerous specimens, though not of the most gigantic proportions. We have the Siorcalleact (Circle temple), the Cromleact, the Dallan, the Carnan, and the Carn, with many other objects, the uses and origin of which are now utterly unknown. There is no proof that the Druids ever used any covered temples, at least in this country, or probably elsewhere. In France are the remains of such temples, which are popularly ascribed to the Druids; but it is more likely

that they belonged to the Romans, who had conquered and occupied a great part of that country. It appears to have been a prominent article of the Druidical creed, that to worship their gods within covered temples was contrary to the notion that ought to be entertained of the divine immensity. We have this on the testimony of Tacitus, and other ancient writers. It is, however, stated that owing to Roman ideas the Druids of France erected temples of unusual magnitude, some roofed, and others open and roofless according to the ancient rule. In a part of that country, called Montmorillon, was a stately edifice of this kind, having on the entrance over the gate the statues of eight gods, which were believed to be Druidical divinities. These were probably the effigies of the gods, whose names were bestowed on the seven days of the week, together with that of Minerva, who was a favourite deity of Druidism. It is not known whether this temple, and its rude statues, were erected by the Druids themselves, or by the Romans, who generally adopted the gods of the conquered countries, and who, by constructing an edifice of this kind in Gaul, would have performed an act highly calculated to flatter and conciliate a people of strong religious feelings.

The earliest simple specimen of their temple was a circular portion of ground, inscribed all

round with a furrow, or enclosed within stakes. This temporary construction was called *teampul*, (temple,) from the word *timcheal*, or *tiomchal*, which means "round." But where there was an opportunity of surrounding the place with growing oak trees, it was much preferred for their *teampul* by the Druids. All the temples of this kind have, of course, disappeared; but there are others of a more permanent construction which have survived the lapse of ages, and now raise up their grey heads on the hill-side and in the valley, awakening the curiosity of the beholder, and the deep interest of the antiquary.

These are the Siorcalleachts, which are composed or constructed of large pillar stones, set on the ends, round a space of ground in the form of a circle. Of these there is a large variety. Some attain to majestic proportions, both with respect to the size of the stones and the quantity of ground enclosed. Others are small and unpretending in their structure. The presumption is, that they were made small or large according to the numbers of the worshippers, the relative importance of the Druidical stations, or, perhaps, the extent of the religious ceremonial offices in connexion with them. It appears they were composed of twelve pillars, or of the multiples of twelve, and it is conjectured that these were emblematic of the twelve signs of the zodiac, as, probably, the Siorcalleacht was

a temple of the sun. Sometimes there were three circles of these pillars, one outside the other, and the whole surrounded by a *lios*, that is, by a fosse or trench, in which were two or three openings or passages, to admit ingress and egress. No doubt, there was some symbolic meaning in the three circles of pillars which, perhaps, it is now difficult to find out or conjecture. They might, not inappropriately, have been intended to represent a crown of rays, which was typical of the sun, and also, perhaps, to express some points of their belief, indicated by the number three, which was a mystical number with them, in reference to God, Time, and Eternity. It is also certain that, in many instances, the erect pillars had horizontal cross-stones placed over them, reaching from one to the other, in the shape of a rude binding course. This, however, was not essential to the Siorcalleacht, and many there are without it. It is not easy to say that any particular species of site or situation was needed for these temples, as they are found on the hill, in the valley, and by the sea-side. Altar stones have been found in the centre of the Siorcalleachts, as at Stonehenge in England, laid east and west; for the Druids worshipped with their faces turned to the rising of the sun, or the east. In some instances only a semi-circle of stones is to be found, and it is supposed that the corresponding portion was made up of temporary

stakes fixed in the ground. There is a semi-circle of this kind, consisting of six stones, at a place called Bin-na-leacht, near Mallow, and the name given to it, from time immemorial, by the people, is Seisearleacht, that is the "six-stone heap, or altar structure." Bin-na-leacht means "the hill of the stone of death;" *leacht* being a compound word formed from *lia*, "a stone," and *audhacht*, "death." This is in allusion to the victims slaughtered there. There are some who are of opinion that the semi-circle was a temple of the moon, which often assumes that figure, while the full circle always represented the sun.

Siorcalleacht is a compound word, from *siorcal*, "a circle," and *leacht*, "the flag-stone of death;" while *siorcal*, or *circle*, itself, is made up of *sior*, "continual, or always," and *cal*, "to surround." *Cal* is also "to surround or embrace," in the Hebrew. It is from this word *siorcal*, or *siorcalleacht*, that the English word "church," is probably derived; as also *circulus*, "circle," of the Latins, and *kuklos* of the Greeks. If we look in our dictionaries for the derivation of the word "church," we will find for our information, *circe*, of the Saxons, and *kirk* of the Scotch. The lexicographers cannot go higher. But here in the Celtic we find the original root *siorcalleacht*, "the pillared temple of the Druids," from which comes in plain regular succession, the Saxon "circe," the Scotch "kirk," and the modern English word

"church." The word "church," however, as we shall see hereafter, may have been formed from *cai-erc*, "the house of heaven."

The Druidical temples may be said to have been composed of rude pillar-stones; and we find that, however elaborate and ornamental might have been the temples of other nations, such as the Greeks, Romans, and Egyptians, they all invariably exhibited the peculiar feature of the column, or the pillar. It is a curious fact that, however large these structures, and sumptuous their details, the peculiar forms of the primitive rude Druidical pillars were still preserved, in all the gorgeousness of both portico and peristyle, with scrupulous, and, as it would seem, with religious fidelity.

The word *teampul*, "temple," has the same meaning as *siorcalleacht*, though springing from a different root with respect to the first part of its compound. It is formed from *tiomchal*, which means "round," and *tiomchal* itself is composed of the word *tim* (pronounced *teem*), which means "time," and *cal*, "to catch," or "embrace," that is, the endless circuit of time, or the eternal circle of existence. How appropriately was this idea exemplified and symbolized in these sacred round places of the Druids, the *teampul* and the *siorcalleacht*; the endless circle representing the circuit of the sun and the endless course of time, and of existence, according to their religious

convictions! Many places in Ireland retain to this day the name of *teampul*, which they derived from the presence there, at one time, of the old Druidical temple.

"It was," says Cæsar, "a special point of the belief of the Druids, that the soul did not perish; *non interire animas*. They also believed that they themselves were descended from the Deity before all ages, and that they formed a part of the eternal existence; as, after death, they were to enter other bodies, and others again, till at last they joined the circle of happiness, according to their doctrine of the transmigration of souls. Thus, the Irish expression for "he died" is *do fuar se bas*, that is, literally, "he got death." *Bas* (pronounced *baws*), is a compound word from *bi*, "living or being," and *aise*, "death;" *do fuar se bas*, thus meaning, "he got the life or being of death." In the popular language is still preserved the interpretation of this, for it says, "*Ni fhuil an sa bhas ach athraghadh beatha*," "there is nothing in death but a change or alteration of life."

The divinity they sprung from was Dene, or Tene-ion, the "fire-god," or the Sun, which, from them, received among other nations the name of Titan. Virgil and Ovid may be specially mentioned as among those who gave it that title, evidently formed from Tene-ion.

They were thus the famous Tuatha De De-

nan, or Dene-ion, that is, the princes or descendants of the god-fire-god, which was the Sun. In treating of the Druids, some ancient writers state that the great object of their worship was Teutate, that is, Mercury. No doubt he occupied a high place in their mythology, and, for some reason unknown, they called him the "first god." The word, Teutate, is of foreign manufacture, from the Celtic *Ta-taithcheannach*, that is, "the god of commerce;" from *ta*, "god," and *taithceannach*, "commerce." Possibly from the similarity of names, these ancient writers might have confounded him with Dia-tenne-ion, the "fire-god." The word Teutonic, as applied to the Germans and other neighbouring nations, bears a strong resemblance to the name of this divinity. It is, however, formed from *touth*, "north," and *thane*, "a country," that is, "a northern man."

Whatever may be the origin of the name, the divinity who bore it was held in high veneration by the Druids. To him they sacrificed many bulls, laying on their altars of stone their palpitating members, and the blood, from the appearance of which they pretended to know the mind and the will of the Deity. The ceremony was accompanied by hymns, incantations, and spells. In very grave and peculiar circumstances, they demanded even human victims for this purpose. If a condemned malefactor were within reach, or an outlawed robber, a captured spy, or prisoner

of war, he would be the first to succumb to the call, and in default of him, the stern choice fell on some slave or miserable old man. The will of Dia-tenne-ion, or of any other special god, was then sure to be ascertained beyond all doubt, by such an agreeable sacrifice, and the proofs of the divine manifestation and favour were solemnly announced to the people. Where it was a human victim the blood was received, with much ceremony, in a vessel of gold, to make observations on it when about to be poured on the altar. In augury, on important occasions, every change and feature of the victim were most minutely observed.

The large stones or flags known in Ireland by the name of Cromleacht and Leaba, or Liaba, were evidently the altars used for these various purposes. The general Irish name of altar is *alloir*, or *altoir*. In the Welsh dialect of the Celtic tongue it is *allor*, or *allawr*. *Alloir*, or *allawr* is a compound word, formed from *al*, "a stone," and *adhradh* (pronounced *arah*) "adoration," that is, the stone of adoration. The word *adhradh* (adoration) is also a compound formed from *iau*, or *ior*, "God," and *radh* (pronounced *raw*, or *rah*) "speaking," that is, speaking to God. To this is sometimes added the intensitive *adh*, making *adh-adhradh*, that is, speaking to God with great intensity. From this has come the *adoro* (adore) of the Latins; and from *adhradh*

is derived their *ara*, "altar, or shrine," as well as *are* (prayers) of the Greeks. The second general Celtic name for altar, that is *altoir*, appears to be the basis of their *altare*. *Altoir* is formed from *alt*, "a high place, or hillock," and *adhradh*, "adoration," for many of the Druidical altars were established on the high places, or on the tops of the hills. Latin scholars attempt to give derivations of their own for *ara*, *altare*, and *adoro;* but these are puerile, far-fetched, and destitute of real meaning. Another name given to a stone of adoration, or an altar, in the Celtic, is *cloch-adhradh*, abbreviated *clochar*, from *cloch*, "a stone," and *adhradh*, "adoration." The town of Clogher, in Tyrone, derives its name from the presence there, at one time, of a stone of this kind.

The altars of the Druids were invariably of stone; and *crom-leacht* and *leaba*, or *liaba*, were different kinds of them. According to some, *crom-leacht* means the stone or altar of Crom, an idol or image of the sun. In the opinion of others, it means the bent stone, or altar. It is, rather, formed from *cromadh* (pronounced *cromah*), "bending," and *leacht*, "a stone of death," that is, "the bending or rocking stone of death." These are flat, of an oblong shape, and sometimes of enormous size, with the long ends facing to the east and west. They have a bend or dip to the east, doubtless to promote the flowing of the blood in that direction. They are poised on

another stone, placed under the centre in such a way that the force of a man's hand can rock them up and down. Evidently this contrivance was designed as a means of agitating the blood and palpitating members of the victim, and from the appearance thus presented, of better enabling the priests to augur the will of the gods, with respect to the object or undertaking they had in view. The whole structure, consisting of the upper flag, the two or three supporting stones, and generally another large flag lying near them, was called by the general name of *crom-leacht*, "the bending stone of death."

Leaba, or *liaba*, appears to be a compound word formed from *lia*, "a flag-stone," and *iobadh* "death;" that is, the stone on which the victims or animals were immolated. In confirmation of this it may be stated that the name of altar in Greek is *thusiasterion*, from *thuiein*, "to kill, or immolate;" and the name of it in Hebrew is *misbeach*, from *zabach*, "to kill." *Leabigh-na-Feine* is a name often given to these large stones in this country, that is, the immolating stones of the Fenians, or Scythians.

These altars are stationary, resting firmly on two or three stones placed under them. *Crom-leacht* and *leaba* mean the same thing, that is, the stone altar; but *crom-leacht* seems to be the rocking-altar, for agitating the blood and members of the victim. For what other object, or in

what other particulars, its use might have been distinguished from that of the *leaba*, is not known. To give an idea of the size of these fixed altars, I may say that here, at Castlemary, near Rostellan, there is one fourteen feet long by twelve broad, and more than four feet thick. At Glanworth, near Fermoy, is one seventeen feet long, eight feet wide, and three feet deep, and it was at one time surrounded by a *siorcalleacht*, or stone circle, twenty-eight feet in diameter. Near each of these altars was a smaller, but still massive flag-stone, which it is supposed was the pedestal for the image, or rather the emblem of the deity to whom the altar was dedicated, or the sacrifice offered. Another stone was there too, having a concave surface, for, as some think, containing water with which the priest sprinkled himself and the victim, when he was about to offer sacrifice. It is, however, more likely that this was a smaller altar, which, by its construction and hollow face, was specially designed for receiving and retaining the blood of the victim. In the Celtic language the word *mias* (pronounced *meeas*) means an altar, and this is commonly understood as meaning a hollow vessel of stone or wood. It also means a dish, as well as a dish-shaped altar. In many instances the surfaces of the large altars were not calculated to retain the blood. They were, like the one at Castlemary, near Cloyne, more convex than even, or flat; and thus

another altar might have been required for the special purpose of retaining the blood.

All these stones were considered as forming a part of the sacrificial structure, and around them, for their protection, was always erected the Lios, or mound of circumvallation, composed of rude materials, such as earth, or undressed stones, or both combined. Trees, and especially the oak, were for these places a most important feature. The popular language has, probably from local circumstances or events, given qualifying names to some of these structures, such as *Liaba-chailligh*, "the immolation-stone of an old woman" (the victim), near Fermoy; *Liaba-na-bo-finne*, "the altar, or immolation stone of the white cow," near Rostellan; and *Liaba-mullaghga*, near Mitchelstown. They are also, in their various localities, made the subjects of many popular legends, teeming alike with the wonderful and the impossible.

These two kinds of altars must have been numerous, and are now found in many parts of the country. The people have been, and still are, very reluctant to destroy them, whether it is from superstitious fear, from the influence of old associations, from the traditional stories regarding them, or from the natural respect generally entertained for the venerable monuments of antiquity. The antiquarian and the scholar will never regret this virtue or weakness on the part of the

people, whatever view unimpressible obtuseness, or selfish political economy, may take of the subject.

In some instances, sepulchral urns and bones have been found under or near these stones; and, from this fact, many have inferred that they were not altars, but monuments of the dead. Their character, as altars, however, is fully established, and surely a religious feeling might have induced a Druid, or an old chief, to request that his ashes may be permitted to repose near that which was to him, in life, an object of respect and veneration. Besides, as there were human sacrifices, the poor enthusiast, who would have given his life for the good of his people, might have been deemed worthy of an urn or a sod near the altar on which he would have been immolated a voluntary victim. The presence of ashes near these places can be accounted for by this supposition, and also by remembering that the Celts, like other nations, had burnt offerings. There is another species of altar in Ireland, and also in France, Britain, and Scotland, called, in the Celtic language, *carn*. The brow of a hill, or an elevated spot here and there, is called by this name. It was certainly an altar, for *carn*, in the Irish language, means "an altar," and also "a priest," probably, the peculiar, or special priest of the carn. What were the object and uses of this kind of altar?

Cæsar tells us, that before going to war they solemnly invoked the favour and aid of Mars, the god of battles, and vowed, as an offering to him, all that they would capture from the enemy. A part of the spoils thus taken was burned in a place consecrated for that purpose, and another part was collected to another consecrated spot, where everything was religiously and scrupulously allowed to remain, as a votive offering to the god. So great was the veneration, inspired by religion and patriotism, for these monuments, that even gold, and silver, and precious stones, taken from the enemy, were allowed to remain there untouched till the arrival of that period of the year when, perhaps, they were to be removed away, by public authority, and in a public procession, to be formally distributed among the victors. The slightest violation of this rule was inexorably punished by the infliction of torture and of death.

The carn was probably the place where these spoils, consisting of horses, cattle, and even the bodies of the slain warriors, were burned; and the *carnan*, another of the national sacred places, was the spot to which the other portion of them was gathered, to remain there a monument of the victory. Even to this day some of the carns of our country bear the names of the slain chiefs whose bodies were burned on them; and, in many instances, their soil exhibits quantities of calcined and vitrified substances, which must be

regarded as the clear and certain results of great heat and fusion.

The word *carn*, (pronounced *kawrn*), seems to be formed from *ca*, "a house, or structure," *adhradh* (pronounced *arrah*), "adoration," and *an*, "a place of," that is, "the place of the house or structure of adoration;" or it may be a compound of *caidh*, "holy," and *aran*, "a high mound, or hill." With the Druids these were favourite places for celebrating the worship of the gods. On some the Beal fires were lighted in honour of the Sun, and on others, in thanksgiving to Mars, was solemnly consumed a large portion of the spoils taken from the enemy. From the presence of large heaps of stones on these places it is conjectured that, at the ceremony of burning the enemy's spoils, the people threw stones on the pile to express horror and detestation, according to an Oriental custom. Even, very recently, in this country, stones were heaped in this way on the graves of murderers, and on the places where persons were supposed or known to have been maliciously killed. In Wales they have a bad wish, conveyed in these terms:—"May your monument be a carn;" that is, may you die the death of the execrable, or, according to the original interpretation—"May you be burned together with the spoils taken from you by your enemy, and may your ashes lie scattered among the stones on the top of the hill."

On the carn of Dia-Mart (Mars), a sacrifice was offered before battle to propitiate the favour of the god. The victim here was, probably, the horse or the ass; while, after the battle, they offered him a portion of the animals taken from the enemy. Where a sacrifice was offered to Mars, the ceremony was accompanied by the presence of a naked sword, which was the emblem of the god, and which, on these occasions, was stuck in the ground. *Carnach* is, in Irish, one of the names of a priest, doubtless from the word *carn*, or "the structure of adoration."

The places selected for the carn and carnan were, generally, the brows or summits of the highest hills, commanding the best view of the country. It was there the local chief, or king, was solemnly installed and proclaimed. Standing near the altar of the god, and those spoils, or monuments, which his ancestors and his people had taken from the enemy, that is, the burnt carn on the one side, and carnan of still remaining spoils on the other, he swore that he would be ever faithful to his trust, and defend his territory against all foes, no matter from what quarter they may come. While making this declaration, he cut with his sword successively to the east, west, north, and south. On these occasions he was surrounded by his people, with their implements of war, and all

the barbaric magnificence at their command. This singular custom still continues in a few countries formerly occupied by the ancient Celts. It was lately observed at the magnificent ceremony of the crowning of the Emperor Francis Joseph of Austria, as king of Hungary. Probably the hurling of the arrow or dart out to sea at their boundaries, as practised by our city corporations on anniversary days, is a remnant, or a modification of it.

Carnan (pronounced *kawrnawn*) is formed from *carna*, "booty or spoils, and *an*, "one" or "definite," meaning the particular site, that is, "the place or heap of the spoils taken from the enemy." It was highly impious to violate that heap by taking, or appropriating, any of the articles deposited there. In Ireland there is still commonly used an expression which is thought to have originated at the ceremony of depositing these spoils. It is this—"May God increase the heap." *Go meadaighe Dia an carnan;* that is, according to the original meaning, "May God increase the heap of spoils by giving us other victories over the enemy." Most likely the warriors and their priests used these words when conveying the trophies to the place, and depositing them there.

The *Dallan* (pronounced *dhallawn*) is another of the Druidical monuments. It consists of a large pillar stone stuck deep into the ground, and

standing from six to twelve feet or more above the surface. In some instances, two of these are found standing side by side, at the distance of two or three feet asunder, with a massive large flag-stone resting on the ground beside them. What is the meaning of Dallan, and what were its uses? Dallan is a compound word formed from *de-ail* and *ain*, that is, "the god-stone of the circle," or, perhaps, *an*, "one," "definite." It was, like all their other monuments, surrounded by the *lis*, or circular enclosure, to separate it from profane use, and to indicate that it was consecrated ground. This was the general place of assembly for the transaction of temporal matters, for fairs, perhaps, and markets, and it was also the judgment seat or court of the Druid. It was the duty of the Druid to frame laws and dispense justice, as well as to preside over the public worship. Here, then, at the dallan, he held his open air court, to ratify agreements and contracts, to adjudicate on minor cases of litigation and dispute, and pass judgment on criminals for certain offences. It appears that it was usual to swear by the dallan, with the hand resting on it. Contracts and covenants were ratified there by persons facing each other while placing their hands, in token of faith and solemnity, on the sacred stone, and kissing it at the same time. It is surmised that the stone crosses erected by the early Christians in their market places, were in-

tended for a similar purpose, when the Druidical courts and their ceremonies had passed away. Even some of the dhallawns of the country have had rude crosses inscribed on them, apparently for this object. Among the early Christians in Ireland, it was a usual custom to swear by the cross, and by the memorials of the saints; and, probably, the presence of the cross on the books of the Evangelists in our courts of justice at the present day, is a remnant of the practice. The two-pillared dhallawn was probably a higher court than that of the one pillar; and it is conjectured that the large flag-stone lying beside it, was the judgment seat of the presiding Druids. The dallan is to be found in all the countries formerly held by the Celts. In parts of France they are very numerous, and are called by the name of *dolman*, which is evidently a corruption of the original name dallan.

In the names which these monuments still bear in Scotland, are clearly traceable some of the uses to which they were devoted. The places where the erect pillars stood are, in many instances, called *dalmany* and *clunmany*. Dalmany is a corruption of *dal-na-mionna*, which means "the god-stone of the oaths," and clunmany is *cluain-na-mionna*, that is, "the circumvallated place of the oaths." The Roman oath *Per Jovem lapidem*, "by the stone Jupiter," was, in all probability, derived from the dallan; and

among the Irish the asseveration, *Dar an gcloch seo*, "by this stone," prevails even to this day. A pompous popular asseveration of this kind was the following, at one time much used :—"*Dar an leac Phadric ata a Gcasiol*, "by the stone of St. Patrick that is at Cashel." The vassal often received the grant of his lands, and, in return, swore fealty to his chief at these sacred stones. In the old castle of Blarney, near Cork, is a famous stone which adventurous tourists and travellers, as well as the natives, are fond of kissing, to make them polite, truthful, and fascinating for ever! It is surmised that this was once a part of an old Druidical dallan existing near the place, and that from some whim or fancy, the local chief, M'Carthy, ordered it to be built up in the front wall of the square tower of his new fortress.

The word, *dallan*, enters into the names of many places in Ireland. There is, for instance, near the harbour of Queenstown, a fine old manor, called Rusdhallain, (Rostellan,) from *rus* (a plain), and *dallan*, "the god-stone." The two-pillared dallan, from which the name is derived, still stands there on the sea shore, in despite of the continual progressive encroachment of the tide. To this class of monuments, most probably, belongs a perforated stone that is found at a place popularly called Leac-an-dha-arrah, in the parish of Kilpadder, near

Mallow. Leac-an-darrah means "the stone of the double pledge," and it is thought that the persons entering into the engagement there, grasped or touched hands through this aperture in the stone. This hole in it, however, must have been natural, as the chisel was scrupulously excluded from all our Druidical monuments.

Cæsar says that the Druids of France held a high court of justice once every year, at a consecrated place in the centre of their country, where grave matters of dispute about boundaries and property, were finally adjusted. There was a similar court in Ireland, and for it, in all probability, all the heavy suits and important cases were reserved, while the minor points were decided at the local tribunals, that is, the dallans.

In the ancient province of Meath, and not far from the boundaries of the other four provinces, there is an old territory which was known by the name of Uisneach. It was called the navel of Ireland, either from its geographical position, or perhaps for some reason in connexion with ancient Mythology, just as Delphi, the seat of the famous oracle in Greece, was named the navel of the earth. Ancient legend said that it was here, on the arrival of the Druids in Ireland, the first sacred fire was lighted in the country by an Archdruid, named Midhe. On

a hill there is a large stone called Ail-na-mireann, that is, the stone of the parts or the divisions. This was the high court to which the Druids, with all others interested in these matters, came every year, to hear and decide the various heavy cases of dispute and litigation, that might have arisen in the country. Probably important criminal cases were disposed of there too. The sentence here pronounced was final. As in all other matters decided by the Druids, the person, opposing or violating their judgment, was declared to be execrable, and excommunicated from society, as well as from the offices and rites of religion. The hill of Uisneach enjoyed its high privilege, while Druidism prevailed in the land; and we find that even in Christian times, it continued to be used as a place for the ratification of solemn contracts. Probably, the stone on it was called Ail-na-miream, from the fact that the five divisions of Ireland, or the five provinces, met here.

The objects or monuments of Druidical worship and veneration, as still existing in this country, we have now passed in review. There is one feature peculiar to them, and it is this, that they bear no evidence of the operation of the hammer or the chisel. It was probably a matter of religious rule with them to select, for their altars and their temples, stones which had been found lying on the plains, and which

had been cut, without hands, from the sides of the mountains. Their monuments exhibit, in this way, every form of rudeness and originality. Possibly, however, there may have been no objection to stones raised from the ground, or detached from the parent rock by means of wooden spikes or levers.

Other ancient objects there are which bear the impress or marks of the edged instrument, and which probably existed in the time of the Druids; but these did not belong to their religious worship. There is, for instance, the *Ogham*, or sepulchral monument, inscribed with its mysterious vertical and horizontal straight lines. The word *Ogham* (pronounced *owem*), seems to be a compound of *eo*, "a grave or monument," and *uaimh*, "a cave or burying place." It is, however, to the stone or monument, bearing the peculiar inscription, in vertical and horizontal lines, that the term *Ogham* is generally applied. A monument of this kind is called by the country people, *Ogham craobhach*, that is, "the branchy *Ogham*," from the resemblance of these lines and cross-lines to the tree with its branches. It is now established beyond all doubt, that these scores, or lines, contain a real inscription, and that this species of sepulchral and memorial writing in Ireland, which probably had commenced at a very early period, was used even in Christian times, and on the graves or tombs of Christians.

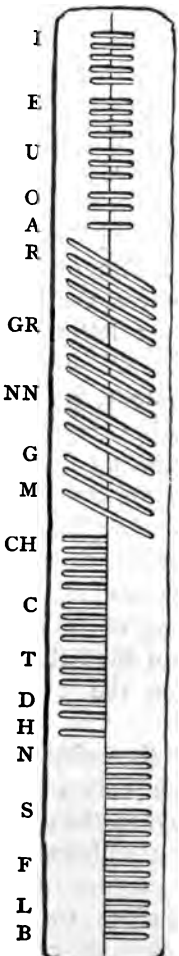
The late Mr. Windele, of Cork, and other industrious Irish Archæologists, have done much to decipher this long mysterious writing, and to give us an intelligible key for it.

Nothing could be more simple or more suitable, in a rude state of the arts, for memorial or sepulchral writing, than the *Ogham.* With any edged instrument of flint, or hard metal, a person can write his thoughts permanently in this way, on the rudest flag-stone, or pillar. No polish, nor expensive preparation, is required, nor any previous practical handling of the engraver's chisel. All is effected by means of simple straight lines, which may be easily traced on wood, or stone, or metal, and yet convey the full force of all the letters of the alphabet. This writing, or the like, must date from a very high period; in fact, from the moment when man first cut a scar or a notch in any object, for the purpose of numbering the days, or the years of his life, or making a rude record of his work, his cattle, his losses, or his property. In the Ogham these original lines are brought under fixed rule, and made to answer for all the letters of the alphabet. Some fine specimens of this kind of writing have been found in Wales and other countries, as well as in Ireland.

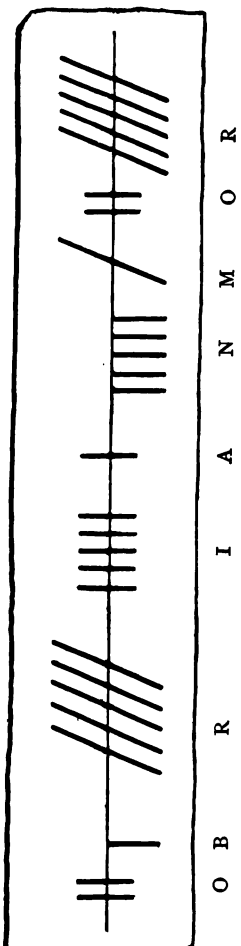
The popular name of *Ogham craobhach* (the branchy Ogham), given to them in this country, is very natural and appropriate. They resemble

the branch of a tree, or perhaps better, a tree trained to a wall, with its branches or limbs spreading, at almost right angles, to the right and the left. A group of limbs, or horizontal lines, to the right of the trunk, that is, to the *fleasg* (vertical line or trunk) will stand for a certain letter. A line, or group of lines (horizontal) to the left of the trunk, or *fleasg*, will stand for another letter; and a line, or score, or a group of scores, drawn across the trunk, or *fleasg*, will be another certain letter. For instance, if the name *O'Brian* should be written on an Ogham pillar, or flag-stone, it would be produced as in the following wood-cut; the writing and reading commencing from the base upwards, or according to the comparison of the tree, from the root to the branches. Where there are two lines of writing, as it often happens, running along the outer surface, or the angles of the flag, the reading of it, as the writing, always commences from the left angle, and generally follows down on the opposite side.

It is not to be inferred from the existence of the Ogham that this was the only kind of writing known to the Druids, and to the ancient Irish. It was merely the monumental writing, and very suitable it was for that purpose. Cæsar tells us that the Druids of France wrote in Greek letters. These were, probably, the original



SCALE OF THE OGHAM.



SPECIMEN OF WRITING.

Phœnician characters, carried by Cadmus to Greece; and, as the Druids of Ireland received the same education and training as their brethren of Gaul, it is to be inferred that they, too, were in possession of that general Druidical writing.

Another monument or relic, which certainly belonged to the Druids of Ireland, has, for many ages, been kept in captivity in other countries. This is the famous Lia-fail, or stone of destiny, as it is called, on which, in ancient times, the monarchs or supreme kings of this country were crowned or solemnly installed. The name *Lia-fail* means "the stone of the king," from *lia*, "a stone," and *fal*, "a king." It is commonly called the "stone of destiny," from a certain legend in connexion with it, which, in the Latin, as preserved by Hector Boetius, runs as follows:—

"Ni fallat fatum, Scoti quocumque locatum,
Invenient lapidem regnare tenentur ibidem."

This Latin legend is evidently formed from the Irish, of which the following is the English translation:—

"Unless the fixed decrees of fate give way,
The Scots shall govern, and the sceptre sway,
Where'er this stone they find, and its dread sound obey."

The Scots were the Scythians of Ireland, that

is, the ancient Irish ; and it is stated that when a member of that princely race was placed on the stone for coronation or solemn instalment, the venerable relic gave its approbation in strange supernatural sounds, which were sometimes as loud as thunder. And the legend said, that if the persons elected happened not to be of the royal blood of Scythia, the stone gave no sign of assent, but was perfectly dumb, thus intimating a silent disapprobation.

In the sixth century, in the reign of Heremon, king of Ireland, this stone was sent to Scotland to add to the solemnity of the coronation of his brother Fergus, who, with a number of kinsmen and other followers, had invaded and conquered a part of that country. It is not well known whether the black stone gave out its mysterious sounds on that occasion, recommending the new king to the loyalty and affection of the Celts of ancient Alba. It, however, was detained in that country, for the purpose of serving at the coronation of all future kings, contrary, probably, to the wishes of the people of Ireland. It was first kept at Argyle, which was the chief seat and early important place of the Scots in that country. About the year 842 it was transferred to Scone by Kenneth the Second, on the occasion of his having greatly enlarged and extended his territories by successive victories over the native Picts. There it was committed to the

custody of the monks of the local monastery by whom it was brought forward, as occasion required, to serve at the coronation of the Scottish kings. Probably it was there the words, "Ni fallat fatum," &c., which it was said to bear, were inscribed on it from the original Irish legend, by a monkish lover of antiquities. In that monastery it enjoyed a repose of five hundred years.

It was, however, again fated to travel. In the year 1300, Edward the First of England made a hostile incursion into Scotland to enforce the rights of feudal sovereignty which he claimed over that country. After subduing William Wallace and his brave followers, he brought with him to England, among other trophies, the famous Lia-fail, and deposited it at Westminster Abbey, in charge of the religious community that existed there. Its history since is not varied by legend or story, and it rests now, silent and unimpressible, under the coronation chair of the English monarchs, though, for even some of them could be vindicated a claim to the ancient blood of Scythia. In its absence, the Irish kings were compelled to adopt another coronation stone, and probably this may be the black pillar-stone over the "'98 men's graves" at the rath of Tara, which Dr. Petrie imagined was the ancient Lia-fail. It was on this mound of Tara

the monarchs of Ireland in former times were installed and crowned; and this stone, which had lain there for centuries, was brought by the country people to mark the resting place of the insurgents who had fallen there in battle.

Our ancient annals state that the Lia-fail was brought to Ireland by the Tuatha-de-Danans, and these were, as I have already proved, the Druids and their people who believed that they were descended from the Deity, that is, from Dia-tene-ion (god the fire lord), the great object of their worship. There were many curious stories and legends among the Irish and Albanian Scots respecting this stone. It was stated to have been one of four very remarkable relics, or curiosities, brought by the Tuatha-de-Danans from the north of Europe, where they had fixed a temporary residence, and that the place in which it had been kept there was called Falias. With respect to its previous history, we are left in a mysterious darkness. But it was said that it was called Lia-fail from Falias, just as it was also said that Ireland was called Inis-fail from it. Lia-fail, however, means "the stone of the king," and Inis-fail means "the island of the king," because the country was, from time immemorial, under the authority of one supreme monarch.

The Irish legend or oracle respecting the

stone, and which was in all probability of Druidical origin, is contained in these words:—

Cioniodh Scuit, saor an fine,
Munab breag an Faisdine,
Mar a bhfuighid an Lia-fail,
Dlighid flaitheas do ghabhail.

In English it is literally—

The Scottish tribe—a noble race—
If a lie be not the prophecy,
Where'er they find the Lia-fail,
Must sovereignty obtain.

The lowland Scots have it thus:—

Except old saws do feign,
And wizard's wits be blind,
The Scots in place must reign,
Where they this stone shall find.

And an English poet has rendered the Latin legend in this way:—

Consider, Scot, where'er you find this stone,
If fates fail not, there fixed must be your throne.

The age of the original lines, and of the stone to which they refer, cannot be less than three or, perhaps, four thousand years.

Did the Druid use that singular old cooking apparatus, the *folach fiadh?* It is most probable that it existed in his day, and as he required nourishment and support like other people, it is

more than likely that, when performing his religious offices in the wilds and forests, he found the contents of the *folach fiadh* both useful and necessary. The *folach fiadh* was a trough for boiling meat, fish, vegetables, and other articles of food. *Folach* means "a covering or concealment," and *fiadh* means "food." *Fiadh* also means "deer," and thus, some think that this trough was specially intended for boiling venison, which, at one time, was very abundant in Ireland. The name *folach fiadh* is well known to the country people, and they bestow it on a heap of burnt stones, of which, as a rule, they know neither the origin nor the use. These stones, however, indicate the presence, in their immediate proximity, of the tub or trough used by the ancient Irish for cooking their food or boiling their deer. It is found deeply buried in the ground, and imbedded in marl, near a running stream, or in a place where a little stream formerly flowed. The writer of this essay was present at the exhumation of one in the year 1853, at Carrigclina, near Mallow; and the description of it, as written at the moment for the *Cork Examiner* newspaper, by one of the antiquaries who met there, will explain its use with a freshness and vigour which, probably, words from memory at this distance of time would attempt in vain:—

"Towards the close of this month, June," says

the writer, "some members of the South Munster Antiquarian Society devoted a few days to the investigation of congenial objects and monuments in the district lying at either side of the Blackwater, to the west of Mallow. They visited the interesting sites of the castles of Drimmineen, of Ballyclough, of Castlemagner, and Lohort, including the 'abbey' of Ballygibblin, and the battle-field of Knockannuss, where young Alister Macdonald, of the legends, fought and fell at the head of his brave troops in 1647.

"On a fine morning they visited, by appointment, that curious massive rock, or mound, called Carrigclina. Clina was the Queen of the fairies of South Munster, and this rock is called after her name. It is a most remarkable place; one would say, a fantastic freak of nature, composed of huge rocks of every imaginable form, and scattered about in every direction. The group of antiquaries consisted of John Windele of Cork, William Hacket, Richard Brash, Rev. Justin M'Carthy, P.P. Mallow, Rev. Thomas Murry, P.P. Glauntane, Rev. Richard Smiddy, C.C. Mallow, and Rev. David Coleman, C.C. Glauntane. An exchange of civilities took place with some local peasant professors of legendary lore, whose rhapsodies, wild and mythic as this place where they were related by them, carried the mind back to remote periods of legendary history. After a look at the wild scenery around, they proceeded

to the site of the Fenian hunter's cooking apparatus.

"It was situated at the western base of Carrigclina, near, as is usual, a small running stream. At the invitation of the antiquaries some stalwart young men of the place had come there to perform the work of exhumation. The operations were conducted under the direction of Windele, whose experienced eye at once pointed out the spot where to begin, and where the trough would be found. The countrymen used their spades and shovels in right good earnest, though to one another, they unmistakably hinted their incredulity as to the existence of any tub or trough in that place. An hour's hard work, however, produced a change in their opinions, for the implement of one of them struck something hard down deep in the soil. Another quarter of an hour, and the upper surface of the tub made its appearance. Nothing could now exceed their amazement, when their labour resulted in the clear discovery of a wooden reservoir or trough, of rude workmanship, and in the identical spot which Windele had pointed out to them. It was found imbedded in a compost of tempered marl, which appeared to have been carefully packed under and about it. From the level at which the delving commenced, to the bottom of the vessel, was a depth of six feet. When the tub showed

itself full and clear, the farmers' sons and labourers gave loud expressions to their joy and amazement. The old rustic patriarch of the family seemed even more lost in surprise and wonder. Taking his stand on a crescent-shaped heap of burnt stones, which nearly surrounded the spot where the delving had commenced, and which was some three feet higher than that level, that is to say, nine feet above the bottom of the vessel, he said that, in his youth, the burnt stones were not on the surface at all, as now, that the place was covered by a turf bog, more than four feet deep, but that, from time to time, this was cut, and carted away for fuel, and that it was thus the burnt stones had first made their appearance. He was completely bewildered at what his eyes beheld there now.

"The vessel itself, as may be supposed, was thoroughly saturated with wet, and much decayed; so that when it came to the surface, the jointed pieces fell asunder. It was composed of planks, eight in number, four of which formed the sides and ends, and four the bottom. Its dimensions were six feet long, four feet broad, and its depth two feet. The workmanship was such as might have been effected with stone-axes. There were no nails of either iron, metal, or wood. A rude groove at each end of both sides received the cross-planks which formed the ends, and, through the middle of the bottom, a rough

wooden bar, somewhat rounded, penetrated into the marl below. The outside of the planks had not received much attention from chisel or hatchet, as they were nearly as rough as when felled from their native oak-forest.

"The use ascribed to these vessels by traditions collected elsewhere was, that of heating water by the immersion into them of large stones previously made red hot in wood-fires. In the tub were found some large stones bearing indications of fire, while the crescent, or mound of burnt stones outside was formed of smaller ones, of the size of macadamised pavement, such as are used at the present day in New Zealand, and the South Sea Islands, by the natives for cooking purposes. In this heap of stones were found mixed some particles of charcoal. The large stones in the tub had been the fire, that is, the heated and ignited lumps, which had boiled the last meal in it. How many ages have passed away since the ancient hunter at his vocation, and, perhaps, the Druidical priest at his, lighted their faces at that fire? Is it much short of three thousand years?"

Owing to the presence and preserving qualities of the peat that surrounded this tub, the heart of the planks was so firm that the writer of this essay had a frame for an old map of Ireland made of one of them; and, at this day it is as sound and as black as ebony. But how frail and

fleeting is man compared with even the rudest objects of his workmanship! Of the small group of antiquarian explorers who witnessed the exhumation of that relic, nearly half have departed for "that bourn from which no traveller ever returns." Windele, their chief, sleeps in the Father Mathew Cemetery at Cork, beside the magnificent stone cross which some fellow-citizens and other admiring friends have erected to his memory. Hacket reposes near him in the same grave-yard; and Father M'Carthy rests near his own altar at Mallow. When the others follow them, the folaḍh fiadhs of South Munster will, to all appearance, enjoy another period of their ancient undisturbed repose.

Of a kin with the folach fiadh, though perhaps not of the same remote origin, is the brewing vat and mill, which is also found deeply imbedded in the soil, in various parts of the country. The traditions of the people speak of a *beoir* or *lion*, "beer or drink," which was produced from the heath, and is reputed to have possessed very invigorating qualities. The process by which this was made, is now unknown; though it is certain that these old wooden mills, which are often massive structures, composed of beams and cross-beams, with tubs, or vats, were used in the production of it. Near them have been frequently found large quantities of decayed heath. It is not certain whether the heath was the chief

ingredient of this old Irish or Danish drink, or whether the tops of it and the berries were used to give it a preserving quality, and an agreeable bitter taste, or, perhaps, to produce in the ingredients the necessary fermentation. At all events, its reputation is high in the popular traditions, and probably it was old enough to have existed in the days of the Druids. But whatever were the ingredients, whether corn, heath, or both, if the rude old brewing mill contributed to the subjoined state of things, as described by the venerable Book of Rights (Leabhar na Gceart), its operations were surely not to be despised :—

> "There are corn, and fruit, and goodness
> In smooth Mumha (Munster), of much prosperity ;
> Mead and drinking horns, and ale and music,
> To the men of Mumha are well known."

Had the Druid any connexion with those large conical mounds of earth that exist in many parts of Ireland ? Probably he witnessed the construction of them ; and possibly the mortal remains or ashes of some of his order might have found a worthy tomb in one of these gigantic structures ; but they were chiefly raised over the ashes of princes and kings of the Scythian blood, as there is ample proof that they are themselves of Scythian origin. They are a

species of pyramid, and of the same family as the mound tombs of the Scythian kings, on the banks of the Borystenes or Dnieper, the great mound at Haliattes, near Sardis, and that of Silbury hill, in Wiltshire. A fine specimen of this kind of structure may be seen at a place called Bruigh-righ, in the county of Limerick; and the name of the place, which is evidently derived from the mound itself, indicates the nature and object of it. *Bruigh-righ* means "the king's sepulchral mound," from *bru*, "a grave mound," natural or artificial, and *righ*, "a king." It is pronounced Brue-ree. This place was the principal seat of Oilioll Olum, king of Munster, in the second century; and probably, here, too, he found a monumental grave. These sepulchral mounds were raised high and large, in proportion to the dignity of the dead, and the respect entertained for them. In many instances they contained caves, or chambers, arched, or flagged over, for the reception of the bodies. The word *brugh* seems to be formed from *bar*, "top or head," and *uaigh*, "a grave." By some it has been confounded with *brigh*, "a hill or hillock," which is formed from *bar*, "top or head," and *i*, pronounced *ee*, "a country." The English word barrow, as allied to this subject, is evidently formed from *brugh*, or *bar-uaigh*, "the head or eminence of the grave."

It would appear that, even in the Druidical

times in this country, the dead bodies were often buried whole and entire. Cremation, for burials, was, perhaps, at a very early period generally practised. It had been introduced, probably, from the feeling of religious reverence entertained by the Celts for fire.

It is, however, certain that among them, as among the Greeks, who had probably imitated their customs, the dead bodies were not always burned, but were often interred whole and entire, and, as it sometimes happened, with respect to dead kings and princes, clad in full armour, and adorned with valuable ornaments of gold. They were sometimes buried in a lying position, sometimes in a sitting position, and sometimes standing erect. They faced indiscriminately any point of the heavens, while the position towards the rising of the sun was in great favour; but the dead chief, who had fallen in battle, was often buried, sword in hand, with his face and right arm turned menacingly against the territories of the enemy.

When cremation, or burning, took place, the bones and ashes were generally put into an earthen vase or urn, and then deposited in their last resting-place under the soil. Many of these urns have been found in different parts of Ireland.

Are there any remains of the houses or habitations of the Druids in Ireland? We have still the names, with the vestiges and ruins, of ancient

habitations, which certainly sprang from a period remote enough to reach the Druid, but which probably belonged to no class in particular, and were possessed by all according to their rank, position, or temporal resources. Of these are the Rath, the Lios, and the Dun, the Teamhair, the Caislean, the Caisiol, the Pallis, and the Cathair.

Rath (pronounced *rah*) is by some regarded as a primitive word—by others as a compound. It would seem to be formed from *reidh* (pronounced *ree*) a plain, and *a*, an eminence or ascent. Very numerous are the places which, in Ireland, are called by the name of Rath. For the most part they exhibit an elevation of ground where, in many instances, circular mounds of earth or stones surrounding a level space within, are found standing even to the present day. The rath sometimes consists of two, three, and even more concentric circles of mounds, with corresponding deep moats. These structures were strongholds of the clans, tribes, or families. In one of them the local chief or king usually fixed his residence, and, where this was the case, the place was called by the name of *an riogh-rath*, that is, the king's rath or fortress. The word *riogh-rath* ("ree-raw") is still common among our people as meaning a festive scene of drinking, talking, and wild enjoyment. It is, apparently, in allusion to the free and boisterous

hospitality which friends and followers often enjoyed under the roofs of the ancient Irish chiefs. Could the English word, "row," as meaning a scene of noisy disorder, be an offshoot of this Celtic expression?

The *lios* was a habitation, or structure, much in the form of the *rath*, but of more modest pretensions. It, too, consisted of a circular mound within which the people housed themselves, in the best way they could, under the roofs of huts composed of timber, straw, or reeds. In the *lios*, as well as in the *rath*, are frequently found subterraneous passages and caverns rudely formed with stones, and covered with stone-flags. It is believed that these served as places of refuge for the inmates when hard-pressed by the enemy, and that they much contributed to the safety of the place by admitting ingress and egress without making an opening or passage through the surrounding mounds. In these caves, or underground chambers, have often been found human bones and skeletons, the sad remains, perhaps, of those who, having taken refuge there, were not allowed by the besieging foe to emerge from them, or to escape in any way; and that thus a slow death put an end to their sufferings. Indeed, it would be difficult for even a small number of persons to live for any considerable time in caves so devoid of air and ventilation. That which, in the south and other

parts of Ireland is known by the name of *lios*, is in Connaught called *uaigh-thalloon* (the cave of the earth), from the presence of these subterraneous caverns, or perhaps because some of them were used as cemeteries. In the *rath* and in the *lios* has often been found that peculiar sepulchral monument called the *Ogham* flag-stone. The word *lios* is probably formed from *ligh*, "a cincture, or surrounding girdle," and *ais*, "a fortress, or strong-hold."

Dun, which appears to be a primitive root, means "a military fortress." It, too, enters into the names of many places in Ireland, and in other countries. Such are, for instance, out of numberless others, *Bran-dun* (the black fortress), in Kerry; *Dun-na-raithah-aile* (the fortress of the stone raths), that is Doneraile, in Cork; and *Lun-dun* (the fortress of the ships), or London, in England. The English word *dungeon* is formed from *dun-daingeon* (the close, or strong fortress).

Teamhair, which is Anglicised *Tara*, is a compound word formed from *teach*, "a house, or dwelling," and *mor*, "large, or spacious." It thus means "the large, spacious, and princely residence, or the palace." Besides the famous one in Meath, where the kings and princes of Ireland met every third year in council, there are several places in the country still known by the name of *Teamhair*. Of these may be

mentioned *Teamhair-Luachra*, in the county of Kerry, which in all probability was once distinguished for its princely and hospitable mansion.

Caislean is a compound word formed from *ca*, "a house," *ais*, "a stronghold," and *leathan*, "wide." It thus means "a large and strong house" for military men in the fort or fortress.

Caisiol is also a compound word formed from *ca*, "a house," *ais*, "a stronghold," and *ail*, "a stone," that is, "the strong stone-house" of the fort or fortress. From this is evidently derived the Latin word *castellum*, as well as its English representative *castle*.

Pallis, or *palas*, is a compound word formed from *fal*, "a king," and *lios*, "a house," that is, "the king's house or residence." *Palas* is an inflection or corruption of *pallis*. The Latin word *palatium* is derived from this, and the Palatine hill at Rome owes its name to the fact that Romulus, as Evander before him, fixed there his *palatium*, or *pallis* (*fail-lios*), that is, "the king's house or residence."

The word *cathair* seems to be formed from *ca*, "a house," and *tara*, "a multitude," that is, "the residence of many persons." In the Irish language this name is bestowed on a city or very populous town. It still clings to places of little importance at the present time, but which, probably, once possessed large populations, and influential local princes.

There is one other structure which claims to be coeval with the Druid. This is a small bee-hive-shaped or round building, composed of stones without cement, and of which the roof is formed of flag-stones, hanging in from the walls in horizontal diminished series, till the top is closed in by a single stone. The name of *cro*, and sometimes of *clocan*, is bestowed on this kind of house. *Cro* means "a hut or hovel," and *clocan* signifies "a stony place, or a structure of stone." Many specimens of these, more or less injured by time, are to be found in various parts of Ireland, particularly along the south and western coasts. From the fact that they were generally, within the walls, at most eighteen feet long, by seven feet broad, and eight feet high, with a narrow door, and two small apertures for air, smoke, and light, it may be easily imagined that they were far from being luxurious or comfortable habitations. The country people, however, ascribe them to the Pagan priests; for in their language one of them is often called *teach-an-Dhroi*, that is, "the house of the Druid."

The names of two other objects of personal and social convenience, and coeval with the Druids, are well-known in Ireland. These are *crannog* and *curach*. *Crannog* meant "a wooden or ozier house," and it also signified "a boat." *Crannog* means "young trees," from *cranna*, "trees," and *oge*, "young." When it referred to

a house, it was *teach-cranna-oge*, that is, "the house of young trees," and it was abbreviated *crannog*. When by it was meant a boat, it was *barc-cranna-oge*, that is "the boat of young trees," and was also abbreviated *crannog*. In these boats the frame work or body was formed of woven oziers, which were covered with the hides of animals. In some parts of Ireland such boats are still used, and they were common among the ancient Egyptians.

Curach was also the name of a boat of this description. The word seems to be formed from *coirt*, "the bark or hide," and *each*, "a horse," as such skins were best suited for them. Other objects may be mentioned as having belonged to the Druidical times, but they are unimportant.

The reader will here probably ask, "Why are the enigmatical Round Towers of Erin omitted from this enumeration of our ancient Pagan and Druidical Monuments?" The reason is this, that a special chapter will be devoted to these Round Towers, to shew that they are of Christian origin, and that the Druid had no connexion with them, except when, having been converted to Christianity, he came, like the rest of the people, to be regenerated in the waters of Baptism.

CHAPTER II.

THE DRUIDS.

SACRIFICES OF THE DRUIDS.—THE ANIMALS SACRIFICED.—THE SACRED ANIMALS.—DRESS OF THE DRUID AT SACRIFICE.—HIS MOVEMENTS, PRAYERS, AND INCANTATIONS.—THE FAMOUS EGG OR BADGE OF THE DRUID.—THE SERPENT, AND SERPENT WORSHIP.—THE FAIRIES, AND HOW THEY COULD NOT PASS OVER A RUNNING STREAM.—TRADITIONS ABOUT THEM AT THE EAST FERRY.—THE FOUR GREAT RELIGIOUS FESTIVALS OF THE DRUIDS.—NUADHULLIG, OR CHRISTMAS.—THE MISTLETOE, OR ALL-HEAL, THE SACRED PLANT OF THE DRUIDS.—THE FESTIVAL OF BEIL-TINNE, THAT IS, THE FIRE OF BEAL IN MAY.—REMNANTS OF IT STILL EXISTING.—THE FESTIVAL OF LUGH-NAS, OR LAMMAS IN AUGUST.—THE FESTIVAL OF SAMHAIN IN NOVEMBER.—THE GREAT IDOL, CROM.—THE FESTIVAL OF BEINEID, OR MINERVA—THE CARRYING HOME OF THE SPOILS OF THE ENEMY.—THE NAMES OF THE FOUR SEASONS OF THE YEAR IN IRISH.—THE SEVERAL ORDERS OR CLASSES OF THE DRUIDS.—THEIR EDUCATION AND LITERARY ACQUIREMENTS.—THE PRIESTS, THE JUDGES, THE PHYSICIANS, THE ASTROLOGERS, THE BARDS.—THE DRESS OF THE DRUIDS AND OF THE CELTS.—A DRUID NAMED ABARIS VISITS GREECE, AND A DESCRIPTION OF HIM BY GREEK WRITERS.—AT WHAT TIME THE DRUIDS FIRST CAME TO IRELAND.—THE CELTIC NAMES OF IRELAND, OF ENGLAND, AND OF SCOTLAND.—THE EAST, THE ORIGINAL COUNTRY OF THE DRUIDS.—THEIR CONVERSION IN IRELAND TO CHRISTIANITY.

A SACRIFICE is an offering made to the Deity of a thing destroyed in his honour, to acknowledge his sovereign authority over all things. Sacrifices consisted, generally, of things useful to man, of animals and of their produce, and of the fruits of the earth. Of human victims also, as

sacrifices, there were instances to be found among almost all Pagan nations. In the Irish language there are various names for a sacrifice, and from one of these, in my opinion, is derived the word *sacrificium* (sacrifice), of the Latins. This Celtic name is *sacrail*, or *saithcrail*. It is a compound word, formed of *saith* (pronounced *saw*) "piercing," *cri*, "heart," and *ail*, "stone," that is, the piercing of the heart at the stone, or at the altar; the Irish name of altar being *alloir*, or *altoir*, from *al*, "a stone," and *adhradh* (pronounced *arah*) "adoration." From this word *sacrail* manifestly comes *sacart*, or *sagard*, the Irish name for "priest."

Another name for a sacrifice is *iobhairt*, which is a compound word, formed from *iobadh*, pronounced *eeba*, "death," and *art*, "a stone," that is "death at the stone, or at the altar." *Art* is also a name for "God," and it may thus mean a death given to God, or in honour of him. Another name for sacrifice, is *offrail*, which is probably formed from *iobadh-air-ail*, that is, "death on the stone, or the altar." Or, it may be formed from *oba-air-al*, that is, "a stream on the stone or altar;" for the blood of the victim was usually poured out on the altar in that manner. The blood was received in a golden cup or vessel, and then poured on the altar. *Iomailt* is another name for sacrifice; and the word is formed from *iobadh*, "death," and *alt*, "a high place." Altars were often erected on the hills.

From *iomailt* comes *immolatio*, "immolation," of the Latins.

The worship of the Druids consisted principally of sacrifice. Indeed, whether it arose from natural instinct, or from primary Divine revelation, it was by sacrifice that man, from the beginning, rendered homage to the Deity. The sacrifices of the Druids, as has been already stated, consisted chiefly of the products of the earth, grain, milk, animals. It is also an incontrovertible fact, that, on great and solemn occasions, human beings were offered up in sacrifice by them. A condemned criminal was the first to fall under their stern choice; but when that victim was wanting, they hesitated not to immolate the aged and the innocent. And the spirit of their religion exercised such an influence over the minds of their people, that many, on the more solemn occasions of their religious ceremonies, offered themselves as victims, to appease the anger, or to propitiate the favour of their gods.

The animals sacrificed by them were generally the bull, the cow, the horse, the ass, the boar-pig, the sow, the goat, and the sheep. Of these, some were offered to one god, and some to another, as was the case with those nations, which, in all probability, had borrowed from them in these matters, that is, the Romans, and the Greeks. There are still traditions and names of

places in the country which clearly indicate the peculiar kinds of victims which were offered up in certain localities in these Druidical times. For instance, here at Castlemary, near Rostellan, is a Druidical altar; and a place in the immediate neighbourhood of it, is called *Bohur-na-bo-finne*, that is, "the road of the white cow." *Leaba-na-bo-finne*, that is, "the death stone, or altar of the white cow," still lives there, too, in the language of the people. The road of the white cow, which comes from the north-west, towards the altar, was the passage through which, according to ancient usage, and mystical rite, the victim, that is, the white cow, was brought, or driven to be sacrificed. In total ignorance of this fact, the people, whose very language preserves the memory of these things, will tell you that this was a fairy, or enchanted cow, which made mysterious journeys through the country. At one place they say it met the bull; at another place it gave away its all-healing milk; at another it drank the water of its cherished well; and at another place it browsed till morning on its favourite meadow. The Irish term for *enchanted*, is *fe Dhraoidheachd*, that is "under Druidism;" because these priests had the reputation of being wonderfully skilled in the arts of astrology, sorcery, and magic. It is this term, when speaking of the cow, and its wanderings, that the people of the district employ.

According to ancient mythology, the white cow was sacrificed to the celestial deities; the black cow to the infernal deities; and the red or brown cow to the terrestrial deities. It is a singular fact, that while in Ireland, there are many places called after the name of the white cow, and of the red or brown cow, there is seldom or never any mention of the black cow in connexion with these Druidical remains. This is accounted for on the supposition, that with the Druids, who were believers in the doctrines of the metempsychosis, or transmigration of souls, a belief in the existence of the infernal regions and infernal deities, did not form a part of religion at all. The souls of the good and of the virtuous were, according to them, transferred after a few happy transmigrations, to the circle of happiness; while the souls of the wicked passed into the bodies of the lower animals, perhaps for many successions and generations, till at last, they were cleansed and purified by that terrible process. The names of the boar-pig, of the sow, of the horse, of the ass, and of other animals, still cling to many localities; and though these are made enchanted, or fairy beings by popular legends, it is likely that they originated in the Druidical religion, and the Druidical sacrifice. In illustration of this, it may be stated, that on the sea-coast, near Trabolgan, on the eastern side of the entrance to the harbour

of Queenstown, is a place called the Teampul, or Temple. In it are lying large flat stones, which have always been called by the name of *Leaca-na-neach*, that is, "the stones of the horses." This was probably a temple of the sun, where, on the verge of the cliff, horses were sacrificed to that luminary as it rose in its majesty above the surface of the waves. The name of the horse is associated with many other places in Ireland, probably for the same reason.

Cæsar tells us that the Druids had their sacred animals, which they neither ate nor offered in sacrifice. They were, as well as we can learn from the Latin names, the hare, the hen, and the goose. These they bred, however, and kept for ornament, and, perhaps, for some other use or object now unknown. It is difficult to understand that at least all the varieties of these useful birds should be so regarded by them; but possibly the prohibition, or the sacredness, extended only to certain species of them.

As a consequence, manifestly, of this belief, certain ideas and impressions bordering on the wonderful and the superstitious, exist to this day among the peasantry of Ireland, with respect to these animals, said to have been held sacred by the Druids. Great importance, especially at night, is attached sometimes to the crowing of the cock; and a hen that crows is held in absolute detestation. It is believed that by the

crowing of the cock at early morn or after midnight, all sprites and ghosts are obliged to quit the haunts of men, and retire at once to their own world of spirits. Similar ideas, and superstitions, respecting this graceful and favourite bird, prevail in other countries too. He who was always the domestic sentinel to give warning of approaching day, and to call men to their toils, their cares, or their pilgrimages, must have made a lively impression on the mind and the imagination, at all times and in all countries.

Possibly, the cock alone of his tribe was the privileged bird, for this was a maxim of Pythagoras—"Feed the cock, but sacrifice him not; because he is sacred to the sun and the moon."

Peculiar impressions also prevail among the peasantry of this country respecting the hare. They hesitate not to chase him, and to eat him when caught; but it is believed that the witch comes sometimes in the shape of a hare, to take away the milk of the cows, or inflict some other injury, and that such a hare can never be captured by either spear, trap, or hound. How often is the sportsman, in his disappointment and failure, heard to exclaim that the "rascal of a hare," which he has been pursuing, and which had foiled him so often before, is not a hare at all, but a witch. How wonderfully do these traditions illustrate and verify the statement of

Cæsar, respecting the sacred animals of the Druids.

The writer has not been able to trace any peculiar ideas among our people respecting the goose. There is, indeed, among them a bad wish conveyed in these words—"*Imtheachd ghe an illain ort*," which means, "may your departure be that of the island goose;" that is, may you go and never return. But whether this originated in any Druidical notions respecting the bird is uncertain. The goose is, indeed, a great favourite, though a noisy adjunct to the homestead, and no small terror to youngsters. He is a grave and wakeful sentinel, whose cry of alarm was, perhaps, often useful in giving notice of the approach of the robber or of the beast of prey. The Romans had a great veneration for the goose, because it was stated that on a most important occasion his cries had prevented the enemy from seizing on their Capitol; but, perhaps, their veneration for the bird was due to the more ancient Druidical ideas, and that he gave this important alarm while enjoying the privileges of his sanctity in the fortress.

When sacrificing, the Druid wore on his head a chaplet formed of the leaves of his favourite oak. He was then generally clad in a white tunic; an egg, or mysterious badge, was suspended by a string from his neck, and he made use of certain mystical, or appropriate gestures,

accompanied by prayers, incantations, and spells. The words and sentences uttered by him were, generally, in rhyme, and always pronounced from memory. The prayers and sentences required for these purposes were so numerous and varied, that it took many years of hard study and severe discipline from the young aspirant to the priesthood to store them up in his mind. All these once-important Druidical rhymes and wild rhapsodies have died and passed away, with the exception of a few fragments in the forms or words of certain charms, or spells, which are still found stored up in the memory of persons in different parts of the country.

It was a part of the Druidical ceremony to move round the altar while the incantations were being uttered, or sung; and that movement took place in such a way as to have the altar and the victim on the right side, or, in other words, to follow the course of the sun. Hence, in augury, the right side was lucky, and the left unlucky; a feeling, or superstition, of which there may be found vestiges existing even at this very day. It appears that the victim was slain on the north side of the altar, that the blood was poured on the altar from the west, and that from the same point the procession and other ceremonies were inaugurated. It is a curious fact that the names of the cardinal points, in the Celtic language, are derived from the position of the Druid as he faced the mystic

and magical east, at sacrifice or at prayer. *Deas* means right, and it also means south or southern, as being on the right hand. *Tuath* means left, and it also means north, or northern, for a similar reason. *Iar* is behind, and it also means west, or western. *Oir* signifies fore-part, or beginning; and thus it also means the east, or eastern, or rising of the sun; for to that point the Druid always turned the face at sacrifice and prayer. *Sior*, or *soir*, the east, is formed from *sia*, "far off," and *oir*, "fore-part." *Siar*, the west, from *sia*, "far off," and *iar* "behind." *Odheas*, the south, is formed from *o*, "from," and *deas*, "the right." *Othuath*, the north, from *o*, "from," and *tuath*, "the left."

The egg, or mysterious badge, or talisman, suspended from the neck of the Druid on the occasion of sacrifice and other ministerial functions, was, perhaps, the most singular and striking part of his attire. It was the chief distinguishing emblem of his office at the judgment seat, as well as at the altar. This egg, a mystery in itself, and full of varied mystic meaning, was not the production of any fowl, wild or tame, foreign or native. In all probability the source from which it was derived, or the manner in which it was produced, was kept a profound secret, and cannot, by any means, be conjectured at present. From the popular stories that were current about it, the industrious Latin writer, Pliny, gives the following account, which, probably, he

himself ranked with the marvellous and the impossible. "There is, besides, a kind of egg held in high estimation by the inhabitants of all the Gauls, unnoticed by Greek writers. It is called the serpent's egg, and in order to produce it an immense number of serpents, twisted together in summer, are rolled up in an artificial folding by the saliva of their mouths and the slime of their bodies. The Druids say that this egg is tossed on high with hissings, and that it must be intercepted in a cloak before it reaches the ground. The person who seizes it flies on horseback; for the serpents pursue him till they are stopped by the intervention of some river. The proof of this egg is, that though bound in gold it will swim against the stream. And as the Magi (Druids) are very artful and cunning in concealing their frauds, they pretend that this egg can only be obtained at a certain time of the moon, as if this operation of the serpents could be rendered congruous to human determination. I have, indeed, seen that egg, of the size of an ordinary round apple, worn by the Druids, in a chequered cover, resembling the numerous calculi in the arms of a polypus. Its virtue is highly extolled for gaining law suits, and procuring access to kings; and it is worn with such great ostentation, that I knew a Roman, by birth a Vocantian, who was slain by the Emperor Claudius for no other cause whatever, except wearing one of these eggs on his breast during the dependence of a law suit."

A multitude of mystic meanings is drawn from these wonderful facts mentioned by Pliny in connexion with the Druid's egg. Its production by the serpents, and its swimming against the stream, are, it is stated, mere allegories of caution, wisdom, union, strength, and perseverance. But in this serpent's egg there lies a deeper meaning than appears on the surface, or than, perhaps, presented itself to the eye of the Latin writer.

With most of the ancient Pagan nations the serpent was an object of great veneration, and even, sometimes, of divine worship. How such honours could have been bestowed on an animal so odious and repulsive, it is not easy to conjecture. Perhaps it was on account of the cunning for which that reptile is proverbial, or in consequence of some dark and perverted traditions connected with the origin and fall of the first man. This latter conjecture derives no small confirmation from the fact, that serpent-worship and tree-worship went, generally, hand-in-hand, among these Pagan nations. For instance, the Druids had a great veneration for the oak.

Most persons are acquainted with that emblem of time and eternity, a serpent biting its tail, in the form of a circle, which has come down to us from the highest antiquity. This figure was so adopted because the serpent itself was regarded as an emblem of the deity, and, in many instances,

even a god. It was in great repute with the sorcerer and enchanter, and in some countries, continues so still. The origin of serpent worship is traced to ancient Chaldea, which, it appears, was the cradle of Druidism. In various countries this singular creed, or idolatry, was known under the titles of *oub*, *ob*, *ops*, *ophis*, *python*, &c., all meaning a serpent. The famous Witch of Endor is called *oub*, or *ob*, which in the Chaldee or Hebrew, signifies "the serpent," and a famous soothsayer of antiquity was named *Ophioneus*, from *ophis*, meaning "a serpent," in Greek. The priestess of the famous oracle of Delphi was called *Pythia*, that is, "the serpent," or "of the serpent." Thus, from some cause unknown, the serpent and serpent-worship embraced that important portion of ancient mythology which is known under the designation of witchcraft, sorcery, and magic, but which was then regarded as a mysterious power, by which the priest or priestess moved the invisible world, influenced the actions and the motives of men, divined the will of the gods, and foretold future events.

The Druids professed to possess these powers, that is, to be skilled in divination and sorcery, and hence their adoption of the serpent's egg, or, perhaps, more properly, the serpent itself. From the ancient mythology of Egypt, we learn that the serpent was held in high veneration there, and that the priests had the representation of serpents

on their bonnets. The badge suspended from the neck of the Druid was, probably, not an egg, but a dead serpent, rolled up in the form of a ball, or of "a round apple," as Pliny expresses it. The skin would exhibit those colours or variegated streaks, which he compares to the appearance of the polypus. But why was it supposed to be an egg? Most likely from the similarity in sound of the old cabalistic Chaldee or Hebrew word *oub*, signifying "a serpent," and the Celtic word *ubh*, which means "an egg." A person not versed in the mysteries of the Druidical profession, hearing the word *oub* (serpent) pronounced, would have easily mistaken it for the familiar name of *ubh*, or egg, in the vulgar language. No doubt there are such things as serpents' eggs. They vary in size, according to the size of the species by which they are produced; but the serpent itself would have been a more expressive symbol of the sun, of time, and eternity, according to mythological rite, and also, more in accordance with the usages that prevailed among various Pagan nations. According to this supposition, those strange features, such as jumping high into the air, moving with rapidity, and swimming against the stream, as mentioned by Pliny, would be of comparatively easy explanation.

Even in parts of America, especially in Mexico, serpent worship was once common; and at

Dahomey, in Africa, at the present day, it forms the sole, or chief, religion of the country. There, for this purpose, are kept thousands of snakes, all descended, it is said, from the great primeval serpent, whatever that was. It is suspected that the Caduceus, or wonder-working rod of Mercury, adorned with two serpents, was derived from Druidical ideas.

I have not been able to discover any distinct traces or vestiges of the Druid's egg, either in the language or traditions of the people of this country. But there is a general, constant, and unfailing tradition, which says that Saint Patrick banished serpents out of Ireland. In ancient pictures and carved figures of the saint, he is represented with the serpent flying before him, or coiled dead, around, or near the lower end of his crozier. How is this to be explained, or accounted for, in reference to an animal which, as far as history can reach, was never known to exist in Ireland, and which, whether it is owing to the influence of the soil or of climate, or of both, cannot prolong its existence there? Our ancient annals, reaching far beyond the Christian era, give an account of the various strange accidents by which men sometimes lost their lives; but they contain no instance of death or danger occurring from the bite of a serpent, nor, indeed, any reference to that dreaded creature, as existing in the country.

It is most likely the tradition originated in the fact that the reign of the Druidical priests, or of the serpents, as they were, probably, called, was abolished by the mission and ministry of Saint Patrick, and that the country no longer witnessed the spectacle of a venomous reptile, dead, alive, or in embryo, adorning the breast of the public minister of religion. This is a natural, and, as I believe, the true meaning of the tradition, or legend. Perhaps the dead or flying serpent was intended simply to mean that he was the Apostle of the country so highly favoured as to have in it no venomous reptile. Most of the great saints had their peculiar distinctive marks. In an age of poetry, allegory, and romance, some striking object or event, in connexion with the life or labours of a saint, was selected as his emblematical badge. Thus, Saint George of England has a dragon, Saint Clement an anchor, and the martyred Saint Denis, of Paris, was represented with his head under his arm. The popular mind, so fond of legend, allegory, and wonder, often founded on these emblems the most extravagant stories.

The circumstance of a running stream, or river, not being passable to the witch or fairy, still lives in our popular traditions, which are, so far, confirmatory of the words of Pliny. It will be illustrated by an incident that occurred in this neighbourhood a short time ago, and the rela-

tion of it may be as agreeable to the reader as it is to the writer, after this grim subject of the serpents and their eggs.

Near Queenstown is a place called the East Ferry, a calm, beautiful, and picturesque spot, where a fairy would like to dwell, especially in summer. From time immemorial a ferry-boat has been established there to convey travellers and traders from one side of the river to the other. It was at one time, when trains and steamers were unknown, the great passage and thoroughfare to the markets of old Cove and of Cork. The smaller ferry-boat is, at present, manned by a tall, brawny-armed oarsman, whose name is Paddy Higgins. He is, besides, a good piper, and can sing a good song, and thus combines in himself the triple character of waterman, poet, and musician. But his dress partakes more of the land than of the sea. He never appears in the short jacket and peculiar headgear which watermen generally wear. His dress always exhibits the long coat and high-crowned hat of the peasant, as more befitting an occasional worker on the farm, and an humble representative of the old musical bards of his country.

One fine night in summer, just an hour or two after dark, as he was standing on his own side of the ferry, after having secured his boat at its mooring-place, he heard a loud, shrill whistle

coming from the opposite shore. Thinking that it was some traveller who wanted a ferry, Paddy put out his boat in all haste, and was soon at the opposite side. Not a living being was there to require his services. He rowed back the boat in a hurry, but her keel had scarcely touched the shore, when he heard another beautiful whistle, even louder than the first, coming from the western bank again. Paddy, in his anger, muttered some hard things on the perverse stupidity of the wanderer, whoever he was, but he turned towards him the bow of his boat, and soon reached the opposite side. All was silence as before. No one appeared, nor was there any response to Paddy's repeated—"Halloo, is there any one there?" except the solemn echo of the hills. With a feeling of disappointment and anger, he rowed the boat quickly back. Just as he was taking leave of the craft, after having secured her at her mooring, three whistles in rapid succession —the most beautiful he had ever heard—penetrated his ears.

Paddy, as a musician, had a very quick ear for sound. "That whistle," said he to himself, "never came from mortal lips, and I thought there was something of the same kind about the other whistles I heard before." He reflected for a moment. He remembered the local stories which said that the "good people" were fond of that place, especially at that hour of the night.

His feelings now alternated between awe, hope, and fear; but, wishing that they would be always friendly to him at that often dangerous post, he stirred up his courage, and, returning breathless to the boat, he unloosed the rope, grasped the oars, and was soon on the opposite side. When the craft grated on the shore, he put out the movable gangway or stepping-plank, and then retired reverently towards the stern. An invitation to embark was given in a manly but respectful tone. "Come on, friends, now," said he, "ten minutes are allowed you to enter, and you shall have a *free* ferry over from me."

Paddy's sense of hearing was silently exercised to its utmost tension at that solemn moment. Perhaps it was the gentle rippling of the waves, but he imagined that he heard invisible feet gliding up the plank, and streaming to the side-seats of the boat. A little more than the ten minutes having passed, according to his mental calculation, he hauled in the plank with reverence and awe, and rowed back the boat without uttering a syllable. He saw nobody; but from the steady bearing of the boat in the water, and her weight on the oars, he calculated that she was very full.

On reaching the opposite side the plank was again put out, and ten minutes allowed them to land, after which, in his usual phrase, the oarsman wished them all "good luck and a safe

journey." The boat was then secured to the mooring-post, and, though he remained near it for a considerable time, not a whistle nor a whisper was heard any more by him that night.

They were, in Paddy's estimation, the "good people" of Ballymore graveyard, who were coming to visit their friends of the graveyard of Gurrawn, on the opposite side of the river.

Paddy did not conceal the strange occurrence from friend or foe. I have heard the story from him myself. Paddy is a very correct, sober, and industrious man, but some of his neighbours suspected that he was a little mellow that evening, and in somewhat an elevated and poetic mood. In any case he was not the less capacitated to receive and transmit those traditions of ancient fairy-tale which had come down to him, through, perhaps, thousands of years, from the old Druid of Rostellan, whose altar and judgment seat still stand near the verge of that beautiful salt lake and river, where Paddy, with his oars, has been for many a long day earning an honest and honourable subsistence.

As we have already seen, Druidism dedicated every day in the week to one of their gods, and probably assigned to it special religious observances. But there were four periods or seasons of the year, at which the public worship was conducted on a scale of extraordinary magni-

ficence. The names of these seasons are still preserved in the Irish language, as commonly spoken by the people. The first was *Nuadhullig*, which corresponds with Christmas, and is still, in Irish, the name of Christmas. The second was *Beiltinne*, which corresponds with May, and is still the Irish name of May. The third was *Lunas*, which corresponds with the month of August, and is still the Irish name of that period. The fourth was *Samhain* (or *La-Samhna*), corresponding with the month of November, of which it is still the name in the Irish language.

What were the principal religious observances of that period called Nuadhullig, Christmas?

Nuadhullig, or *Nodhlag*, is an abbreviation of *Nuadh-uile-iceadh*, which means the New All-heal, that is, the New Mistletoe. At that period, when the new year was about to commence, the Druidical priests assembled in a large body outside the dwellings of their people, and set up the shout of *Nuadh-uile-iceadh! Nuadh-uile iceadh!* New All-heal! New All-heal! This was the thrilling note which announced that they were going to the woods in search of their sacred plant, the mistletoe. Immediately, all the people flocked around them to join in the solemn procession.

On reaching the forest they made the most diligent search for the plant, and when it was found, especially if growing upon their favourite

oak, they gave expression to their great joy in loud shouts of exultation. Then, with much ceremony and form, the priest, highest in dignity amongst them, ascended the tree, and with a golden pruning-knife cut from its branches the divine plant, which was received by those below in a large linen cloth of unspotted whiteness. Two white bulls, which had been conducted to the place for that purpose, were sacrificed to the gods; after which, the Mistletoe, or wonderful All-heal, was brought home in solemn procession, amidst shouts of joy, mingled with prayers, incantations, and hymns. Then followed a general religious feast, and a prolonged scene of boisterous merry enjoyment, to which all were admitted without any distinction.

A curious and particular account of this ceremony of the All-heal is given by the Latin writer, Pliny, in the 16th Book and 44th chapter of his Natural History. His words are, "The Druids (for so they call their Magi), have nothing more sacred than the mistletoe, and the tree on which it grows, provided it be an oak. They select particular groves of oaks, and perform no sacred rites without oak leaves, so that from this custom they may seem to have been called Druids according to the Greek derivation. For they think that whatever grows on these trees is sent to them from heaven, and is a proof that the tree itself is chosen by the deity. But

the plant is very rarely found, and when found is sought for with the greatest religious ardour, and principally in the sixth moon, which is the beginning of their months and years, and when the tree is thirty years old, because it is then not only half grown, but has attained its full vigour. They call it ALL-HEALING in their own language; and having prepared sacrifices and feasts under the tree with great solemnity, they bring up two white bulls, whose horns are then first bound. The priest, clothed in a white garment, ascends the tree, and cuts it off with a golden pruning knife, and it is received in a white sheet or cloth. Then they sacrifice the victims, and pray that God would render his own gift prosperous to those on whom he has bestowed it. They believe that, administered in a potion, it will impart fecundity to any barren animal, and that it is a remedy against all kinds of poison."

Pliny renders the name *uile-iceadh* (pronounced *uil-eekey*), all-healing, very accurately in his own language, by the term, *omnia-sanans*. It appears that the sixth moon, in which it was gathered, counted from the beginning of August, when the great religious feasts and solemnities of *Lunas* took place in honour of the moon. The mistletoe is a graceful branchy plant, which grows, like wood-ferns, on the branches of the oak, the apple, the pear,

the hazel, the elm, and various other trees. It will not grow on the beech, holly, or walnut. Climate affects it much. It is seldom found in some localities, though abundant in others; but under the care and culture of the Druids it was made to take root in almost every orchard and forest. It grows to about the height of two feet. It is of an olive-green colour; but, with the toning influence of age, assumes a yellow or golden hue, and looks very pretty, with its white berries, in winter. It is now, perhaps, impossible to account for the veneration in which it was held, and the wonderful qualities which it was supposed to possess. Religion, legend, and poetry, threw a halo of power and mystery around it. Even it has been gathered by the muse of Virgil to grace the beauty of his immortal lines. In the sixth book of the *Æneid*, is a beautiful passage, describing the interview between Æneas and the Cumæan Sibyl. It is too long to be inserted here, but the allusion to the "golden branch," and to its power over even the invisible world, will justify a short quotation from it.

When the Trojan hero had formed the resolution of visiting the realms of Pluto in search of his deceased father, he applied to this famous priestess for instruction and counsel in the matter. She informed him that, even for the son of a goddess, it was a most perilous undertaking;

but that it may be accomplished with the aid of a certain golden branch which grew in the dark recesses of the forest. "A branch with golden leaves and a slender stalk," she said, "is concealed in a dark tree, and no one can descend to the infernal regions till he has first plucked this plant from its parent trunk." By the guidance of two mysterious doves, Æneas discovers the treasure in the woods. It is thus described :— "Such was the appearance of this golden branch on the dark oak, as when the mistletoe doth flourish with new vigour in the woods during the winter's cold."

It is manifest that the poet had here in view the sacred plant of the Druids. Nor was it in this case without its utility. On the verge of the Stygian lake the progress of the hero was opposed, with wrath and threatening accents, by the grim Charon, thus :—

> "Mortal, whoe'er thou art, in arms arrayed,
> Stand off; approach not; but, at distance, say,
> Why to these waters dar'st thou bend thy way?"

But the appearance of the branch disarmed his anger—

> "Then show'd the bough that lay beneath the vest;
> At once his rising wrath was hushed to rest,
> At once stood reconcil'd the ruthless god,
> And bowed with reverence to the golden rod."

That was, surely, a high character for sacred-

ness and mysterious power, which reached up even beyond the foundation of Rome. And yet, in all probability, the reputation of the All-heal of the Druids ascended many ages higher. We have no means of ascertaining all the uses to which it was converted. It appears that at the great annual solemnity the plant was broken or cut up in small fragments by the Druids, and distributed to the people as a remedy against all evil, and the pledge or harbinger of every good. Even the tree on which it was found growing was not without its reputed virtue. It appears that it, too, was cut down and distributed in small logs to the people for their fires, and that no small virtue was attached to the half-burnt fragments of them.

Of all these proceedings and ceremonies we have still living traditions in Ireland. Persons proceed to the woods to bring home the Christmas tree and the Christmas branches, and as the All-heal cannot often be found, its place is abundantly supplied by the holly and the ivy. With these the cottage is adorned, as also the temples of religion. Even the *uile-eekey*, or All-heal, is brought from great distances for the occasion, by those whose circumstances enable them to procure it in that way. But what was once in honour of Paganism, is now in honour of Christianity, and to celebrate the great festival of Christmas.

Nor is the famous log ever forgotten. In Irish it is called *bloc-na-nuadh-uile-iceadh*, abbreviated, *bloc-na-nodhlog*, that is, the log or block of the new All-heal. It is a singular fact that other countries still retain a fragment of this word All-heal, as the name for Christmas, and, yet, even the learned there are totally ignorant of its meaning.

The word, Yule, has puzzled all the antiquaries of England and Scotland, and they have given it up in despair. It is simply an abbreviation of *Uile-ìci*, which means All-heal, the Celtic name of that season, now called Christmas. In France, another Celtic country, the name of Christmas is *Noel*, a term that has completely baffled all their antiquarian researches. Some there think it comes from *Emmanuel*, or from the Latin word *Nativitas*, nativity, or from *Nova*, new things, or news. It is simply formed of *Nuadh* and *Uile*, that is *No-ule*, an abbreviation of the Celtic term, meaning new All-heal.

Thus it is that the fossil, here dug up whole and entire from the Irish soil, indicates the species to which the disjointed members found in other countries are to be assigned.

A most expressive emblem, thus, of Christmas is the branch of mistletoe, which, in the Celtic language, has given a name, for centuries without number, to that season of the year ; and when properly understood, and purified from the

grossness which, in some instances, a depraved custom has attached to it, its presence will, not inappropriately, typify the great All-heal of the Christians, that is, the birth of a Redeemer.

The great ceremonies of *Beil-tinne*, which took place in May, were undoubtedly performed in honour of the god Beal. *Beal-tinne* means the fire of Beal. The sun being the great visible object of the worship of the Druids, fire, which for the occasion was procured by some simple mechanism from its rays, was made a particular object of veneration at this season of the year, when the grand luminary had already commenced to ascend high in the heavens and exercise its influence on the face of the earth.

Beal was the universal name of God, or of the Great Spirit and Universal Being, among the Druidical nations. They believed that this Great Spirit united himself to certain great bodies in the universe, especially and pre-eminently to the sun, and to every other body containing fire or light. Their belief was something like that which the shade of Anchises explained to his son, Æneas, in the sixth book of the Æneid of Virgil:

"Know, first, a Spirit with an active flame,
Fills, feeds, and animates the mighty frame;
Runs through the wat'ry worlds and fields of air,
The ponderous earth, the depths of the heav'n, and there
Burns in the sun and moon, and every brilliant star.
Thus, mingling with the mass, the general soul
Lives in the parts, and agitates the whole."

The word *Beal* is supposed to be formed from *bi* (pronounced *bee*,) "living, or being, or life," and *uile*, "all," that is, all life, the life of all, or the Universal Being, which corresponds perfectly with the "fills, feeds, and animates," of the poet, in the above passage.

It is now impossible to ascertain the particular ceremonies that marked the celebration of the Fire-worship, or Beil-tinne, among the Celts. It appears, however, that the fresh fire, like that of the vestals at Rome, was procured from the rays of the sun; and that previously all the fires in the country were ordered to be extinguished at a certain time, and to continue so till the first religious fire was lighted at night, on the top of the Carn, or high hill, by the Druids. Then was lighted a fire on the next hill, and on the next, and so on, till the entire country was in a sacred blaze. Feasts and sacrifices followed. Victims were given to the flames, and among them, probably, were included human beings. As on all other occasions of prayer and sacrifice, both priests and people placed themselves at the west of the fires, with their faces turned to the mystical and magical east. Most probably these ceremonies took place at an advanced hour of the night, and were continued till morning, when the sun, the great form of *Beal*, appeared in his glory above the horizon.

Was this veneration or worship rendered by

the Druids to fire, a corruption of any ancient truth, or primitive revelation? We know that among the people, who had received and retained the true and original revelation, light, or fire, was an emblem of the Deity. God appeared to Moses in the burning bush, and He went before the Israelites, in a pillar of light, on their great journey through the desert. In various passages of the sacred writings, it is stated that God is light. It was ordained that there should be lights in the temple, and in it was kept the sacred fire, which had descended from heaven to consume the sacrifices. Possibly the delusion and corruption, which, among the Druids, made a god of more than one of God's creatures, reached this point of fire also, perverting and confounding both the object and the emblem. It is stated that from the fires lighted by the Druids on this solemn occasion, the people carried home burning brands, or live embers, with which to rekindle the domestic hearths, and that the seed of it, *siol na tinne*, was preserved and continued among them till the next anniversary of Beil-tinne again. In an age of lucifer matches, and almost spontaneous ignition, like the present, it is not easy to comprehend the care and attention, and even the difficulty, with which the "seed of the fire," as it was called, was preserved in past times. The Druids believed that in this way they kept

the sacred fire of Beal perpetually burning, and that great were the benefits which their people derived from its presence and influence among them. Even the fields, at this season, received portions of it, to ensure a fruithful year and an abundant harvest. It is likely that the sacred fire of ancient Rome, which was committed to the care of the vestal virgins, was borrowed from Druidism.

In what part of the country the first fire was lighted on these occasions, is not exactly known. But as the hill of Uisneach, in Meath—the navel of Ireland, as it was called in the language of Mythology—was honoured with the residence and the altar of the Arch-Druid, it is likely that the first flame issued from that place, and thence flew, from hill to hill, with almost the rapidity of lightning. The electric telegraph of modern times is a speedy messenger, and yet it could scarcely traverse the land with greater velocity than the Beal fire of the Druids. Some say that the first fire was lighted on the hill of Tara.

There was a sort of poetry and of mystery about this system which, certainly, exercised a powerful fascination over the human mind. The altar and the carn of the Druid have been deserted for ages; and yet, to this day, there are living vestiges and memorials of his anniversary fire, in Ireland. At a certain period of

the summer, when the shades of eveveng gather over the face of the land, flames of fire are seen to spring like magic, from hill to hill, through the whole expanse of the country. They are also lighted in the hamlets and villages, and in many of the towns. A few of these take place at Beil-tinne, that is, at the beginning of May; but the great blaze is reserved for the eve of the nativity of St. John the Baptist, the 23rd of June.

These are evidently a remnant of the ancient Beal fires. But why do they chiefly occur on the night before the festival of the saint, instead of the old period of Beil-tinne, which was the beginning of May? I do not believe that a satisfactory explanation of this circumstance has been yet given by any of our antiquaries. It was, perhaps, to transfer the practice or custom of lighting these fires from a Pagan to a Christian object. The Nativity of Saint John the Baptist was a great and solemn festival of the Church. Like those of the other great festivals of martyrs, the eve or vigil of it was, in the early ages, commemorated with appropriate ceremonies. The public devotions were kept up all night in the churches of which the saint was the patron; and the solemnities of the next day were ushered in amidst types and figures appropriate to the occasion. Among these was probably introduced a large and unusual exhibition of lights to typify

the Baptist, who, in the Gospel, is called, by the Saviour himself, "a burning and shining light." What could have been more natural than that the early Christian missioners would have directed the people to light their anniversary fires on the eve of this saint, and thus give to the national custom a Christian instead of a Pagan object? To this feeling, most likely, are due the transfer of the fires to the 23rd of June, and perhaps, too, their perpetuation to this day among the people. The seventh and eighth centuries were periods of plagues and other physical calamities in Ireland. Our ancient annals state that at that time some wild prophecies, respecting a fiery blast which was to sweep over the land and destroy most of the inhabitants, about the festival of Saint John, greatly agitated the minds of all classes in the country. Could the fires of Saint John's Eve have had any connexion with these alarming predictions?

Still, perhaps, the fires of the 24th of June were fixed for that time by Druidical rite. In Wilcock's "History of Russia," it is stated that the ancient tribes of that country had a god named Kupalo, the patron deity of the fruits of the earth, in whose honour they lighted fires on the 24th of June. The youths of both sexes, it says, adorned with wreaths and garlands of flowers, met in dance, and leaped nimbly over the fires kindled on this occasion. This would

correspond with the Irish custom, as the day commenced in the evening.

An ancient popular custom of May-ing and May-poling, at this season of the year, still prevails in Ireland. There are now no means of ascertaining whether this anniversary visit to the woods, and the bringing home, in solemn procession, of the tree decorated with flags and flowers, could be any remnant of the Druidical ceremonies. Perhaps it was a substitute for them, and a popular remnant, or part, of some outdoor religious Christian ceremony of visiting and blessing the fields, which was calculated to engage the minds of the people, and withdraw them from the old Druidical practices.

Among the various characters that formerly figured in these processions, was a person robed as a friar or a priest, which would seem to indicate that the custom had its origin in some ancient religious observance. How difficult it was to withdraw the minds of the people from the old heathen practices, may be inferred from the fact that, not very long ago, the herdsmen in the highlands of Scotland were accustomed, on May-day, to perform a kind of rustic charm and sacrifice they called *beal-tinne*, to secure, as they imagined, the protection of their flocks from all evil during the course of the year. If the May procession was originally of a religious character, the erection of the May-pole was evidently in-

tended to be a memorial of it, and, perhaps, also, to indicate that it was to heaven men should look for the prosperity of the season and its fruits.

In the history of the life of Saint Patrick, it is stated that it was at the period of the Fire-worship, and shortly after his arrival in Ireland, he appeared in the neighbourhood of Tara, where the kings, princes, and many of the Druidical priests were assembled at the great council of the nation. Here he intended to face the Paganism of the land in its great stronghold. It was the Paschal time, and as it is stated, or perhaps surmised, Easter Saturday. In the religious office, at which the saint and his companions were engaged, the Paschal fire, or light, was exhibited according to the rule of the church. The appearance of this fire or light, at a time when all the fires of the country were extinguished, awaiting the usual signal from the Druids, excited the surprise and indignation of both the priests and nobles assembled at Tara. They rushed to the place of this violation of their rites, with the intention of punishing those who were guilty of the outrage. Their visit was received by Patrick with the calmness of a martyr; and it is stated that the words of explanation and exhortation, which he addressed to them at that moment, made a deep impression on their minds in favour of the divine

religion which, he said, he had come to preach to the people of the country.

The circumstances of the relation of this event by the old writers, would appear to involve something like a chronological discrepancy. According to the strict rule for fixing the time of Easter, that solemnity can never be later than the 25th of April, whereas the Pagan ceremonies of Beil-tinne took place in the beginning of May. It may be that, in the absence of accurate chronological tables, an error of a few days might have occurred on one side, or the other, and that thus the two periods happened to coincide. Or it may be explained by supposing that Saint Patrick exhibited the Paschal light, not exactly on Easter Saturday, but on some day within the Paschal time, which extends to Ascension Thursday, a period which is always sure to include the first of May, and during which, on certain solemn days, the Paschal light was used at the morning and evening offices of the Church. Perhaps it was on a Sunday evening at Vespers, repeating his accustomed portions of the Psalms, the Saint was engaged, when the Paschal light attracted the attention of the Pagans. Another supposition, not very probable however, is, that the Druids were, at this time, preparing for a fire-worship different from the great one of Beil-tinne or May, and that minor celebrations of

that kind took place at, perhaps, two or three other different seasons of the year.

The next great solemnity, in the order of time, was *Lugh-nas*, or *La Lugh-nasa*, which, as occurring about the beginning of August, has given its name, in Irish, to this month, and also to that season of the year. Of this word the true derivation seems to be *luan*, "moon," and *nas*, "anniversary;" that is, the anniversary festival of the moon. It is now impossible to ascertain the particular rites and ceremonies with which this festival was celebrated by the Druids. As on other religious occasions, there were, of course, feasts, and prayers, and sacrifices. To these, at *Luain-nas*, were added games, processions, equestrian sports, and athletic exercises, which lasted for several successive days. Something corresponding with these took place, in reference to the same subject of the moon, among other Pagan nations, such as the Greeks, Romans, and Egyptians. The only vestiges of this solemnity now remaining in Ireland are the name *Lugh-nas* (*Luain-nas*), that is, "anniversary of the moon," which is given by it to the month of August, and a sort of indistinct popular conviction that something important was connected with it in ancient times. It appears that though the religious features of the solemnity had been abolished by the introduction of Christianity, the games and athletic sports were, in some shape, continued

to the seventh and eighth centuries, and that many visitors and competitors came every year, from even England and Scotland, to be present at them.

Some antiquaries derive the word *Lugh-nas* from *Lugh*, "a man's name," and *nasa*, "fairs;" that is, fairs with games and sports, established by *Lugh-lamh-fhadah*, which means "Lugh of the long hand," monarch of Ireland. According to the computation of our Irish annals, this occurred nearly two thousand years before the Christian era. It was at Tailltean, in Meath, the fair is stated to have been established by him, and in remembrance or honour of his foster-mother, Taillte. It is, however, more likely that *Lugh-nas* is a slight variation of *Luain-nas*, a Druidical anniversary in honour of the moon, and that the observance of this festival was general throughout all the Celtic countries. Lugh-of-the-long-hand, who was probably a man fond of athletic exercises himself, might have given great encouragement to the games and sports always united to the religious feasts of this period; and his name might thus have become popularly associated with them. The English word, *Lammas*, is manifestly a form or corruption of this *Luain-nas*, "anniversary of the moon;" for the language of the ancient Britons was the Celtic, and they, too, rendered the accustomed honours to the moon, as well as to the mistletoe and the sun, in the days of their Druids.

It is stated by the eminent Irish scholar, the late Professor Eugene O'Curry, that the name of *Crom-dubh* is still connected with the first Sunday of August among the people of the provinces of Munster and Connaught. Crom was the great idol of the Druidical worship in Ireland. There were two Croms—*Crom-dubh*, that is, the black Crom, which is supposed to be an image or idol of the moon, and *Crom-cruach*, the bloody or red Crom, which, as we shall see hereafter, is believed to be their image or idol of the sun.

But why was the moon of August selected for these extraordinary honours? Possibly the cause cannot now be ascertained. There are, however, certain features connected with that moon which are not observable in any other moon of the year. Owing to its relative position to the sun, the full moon of this season rises more immediately opposite to the sun-set than the full moon of any other season of the year. Thus, as the sun disappears in the north-west this full moon rises in the opposite direction, in the south-east, spreading her illumining rays over that portion of the earth which the great luminary has just abandoned. This singular coincidence, which the science of astronomy explains on purely natural principles, might have presented something mysterious and supernatural to the mind of the Druid. In the popular language of Ireland, there is still a certain virtue ascribed to *Re-an-fhoghmhair*, that is, to

the moon of the harvest, or the harvest moon. Some think that this arises from the light which it affords for continuing the harvest-work after sunset. It is, however, more likely that it has derived its distinctive name and its reputed virtue from the Druidical worship which made it a special object of observance and veneration at that season of the year. It appears that this was counted the first of their moons by the Druids; and Strabo says that it was their custom to dance before the full moon from evening till morning.

We now come to *Samhain*, which may be called the last and the first, the first and the last, of the great Druidical festivals. Samhain is a compound word, formed of *samh*, "the sun," and *ain*, "a circle," that is, the circle or anniversary of the sun. This was, by excellence, the great festival of the Druidical Celts, who, believing that they were descended from the mighty luminary, always professed themselves its devoted worshippers. It was on this account they called themselves Celts, that is, Celestials, and probably, also, that the Sunburst became the national escutcheon of Ireland. We cannot now discover the various ceremonies with which they celebrated this anniversary of the sun, which took place in the beginning of November, and to this day gives its name in Irish to that season of the year. There were, of course, sacrifices and feasts, and, as it is thought, also, an unusual dis-

play of fires. The horse was offered as a victim to the sun, and, perhaps, the human being, too, in Ireland, as it certainly was in other countries. Upon this occasion was exhibited, for special veneration, the great idol, *Crom-cruach*, that is, the red or bloody Crom, which was a huge image or emblem of the sun. Crom is familiar to the language of the Irish, and many a place in Ireland still bears its name; yet, it is from the "Tripartite Life of Saint Patrick" only, we derive a description, imperfect however, of this famous and dreaded idol. The ancient biographer describes the miraculous destruction of the idol, or the god, by Saint Patrick, in the following quaint language, which is a literal translation of the original Irish:—

"Patrick, after that, went over the water to Magh-Slecht, where stood the chief idol of Erin, *i.e.*, Cenn Cruaich, ornamented with gold and silver, and twelve other idols ornamented with brass around him. When Patrick saw the idol from the water which is called Guthard (loud voice, *i.e.*, he elevated his voice), and when he approached near the idol, he raised his arm to lay the staff of Jesus on him, and it did not reach him; he bent back from the attempt upon his right side, for it was to the south his face was, and the mark of the staff lives in his left side still, although the staff did not leave Patrick's hand, and the earth swallowed the

other twelve idols to their heads, and they are in that condition in commemoration of the miracle."

This "staff of Jesus," or *Bachall Josa*, as it is called in Irish, with which Saint Patrick assailed the idol, was his wonder-working crozier, which was afterwards preserved for many centuries in Ireland. From this narrative it appears that the wreck of the idol and of its twelve satellites, or attendants, was still to be seen in the time of the saint's biographer. Here is the only description of the image which has come down to us; and from it we infer that this idol of the Celts was very gorgeous, massive, and costly. From the presence of the twelve attendants surrounding it, the inference is, that it represented the sun and the twelve signs of the zodiac, which was a favourite idea of the Druids.

The name *Crom*, or *Crom-cruach*, at this distance of time, fails to supply any clue to the object or character of the idol. *Crom*, indeed, means "a maggot," and *cruach*, "red or bloody." If the literal meaning of these Celtic words were a guide in the matter, it would signify "the red or bloody maggot." Yet, perhaps, there is something in them. Beel-zebub is, in Scripture, called "the god of Accaron," and the meaning of Beel-zebub is "the god of flies," or, perhaps, more properly, and originally, "the flies of Beal." The maggot, being an incipient or embryo fly, perhaps,

was intended, too, to convey the idea of an emblem of life and of the sun, and so far of their deity. We are told that in ancient Egypt a blue-bottle fly received divine honours. Probably the delusion and the practice were based on the same curious idea.

There are no means of ascertaining, with accuracy, what peculiar forms Crom and his attendants assumed, whether of men, of other animals, or of inanimate beings. The designation of Cenn-Cruaich, bestowed on it in the Tripartite Life of the Saint, means "the red or bloody heads." The name of Magh-Slecht given to this place where the idol stood, was not inappropriate. It means the "plain of adoration," from *magh*, "a plain," and *sleachd*, "adoration;" and it is supposed to have been situated in the present county of Cavan.

This festival of the sun was chiefly intended as a thanksgiving to the great luminary for the fruits and products of the season, which were generally saved and collected into the granaries at that season of the year. The produce of the field, of the vineyard, and of the garden, was represented in the loaves and fruits with which the religious feast was supplied. It was a solemn season of merriment, of joy, and of religious thanksgivings, according to the ideas that prevailed among that people.

There are still to be found in Ireland some

vestiges of these proceedings. Our All-hallow Eve was the Samhain of the Druids. It was, probably, dedicated to All Saints, to withdraw the minds of the people from the Pagan observances. But, in despite of time and alteration, the bread and the fruits are introduced into the Christian commemoration; and there are some who pretend to think, in their silliness or levity, that a knowledge of futurity may be obtained by the performance of certain mystic signs, and that the heavenly bodies exercise, at that season, a peculiar influence over the destinies of men. It appears, however, that the few who now indulge in these things, seek for amusement more than anything else in these endeavours to discover the events of the dark and invisible future. These four great periodical religious festivals brought round in its entirety the *bliadhain*, or "year" of the Druids. It would appear, too, that their year was called *bliadhain*, from this very circumstance, for *bliadhain* is a compound word, formed from *beil*, "of god," and *ain*, "circle," that is, "the circle of Beal," or "the circle of the worship of Beal." Even the Celtic word *ratha*, which means "a quarter," or fourth part of the year, would seem to be derived from these four religious celebrations. Ratha appears to be an abbreviated compound word formed from *re*, "time," and *adhradh* (pronounced *ara*) "adoration," or "worship." The name of spring in Irish is

ratha-an-araig, that is, "the quarter (or adoration time) of the plough." The name of summer is *samhra*, that is, "the sun quarter," from *samh*, "the sun," and *ratha*, "quarter," or adoration time. It was originally, perhaps, *sunmer*, and borrowed from the Celtic. The name of autumn, or harvest, is *foghmhar*, from *fogh*, "fulness," or "abundance," and *ratha*, "quarter," that is, the time of the new fruits, and of abundance. The name of winter is *geimhre*, that is, "the quarter of the winds or storms," from *gaoth*, "wind," and *ratha*, "quarter," or time of adoration. Was winter originally windter, and derived from the Celtic?

The Irish commonly count the months by saying, the first month of winter, the second month of winter, the third month of winter, and so on. Their language, however, supplies even a variety of names for every month in the year, and some of these names are very expressive. For instance, the name of April is *Abran* (pronounced *abbrawn*), a word formed from *abaidh*, "budding," *re*, "time," and *an*, "year;" the budding season of the year.

In addition to the four great festivals there are in the popular language of the country the vestiges of another religious feast of, perhaps, secondary importance. The period of the year commonly called Shrovetide is, in Irish, named *Innid*. What is *Innid?* It is, at all events, a complete puzzle to antiquaries. *Innid* is certainly a corruption,

or variation, of *Beineid*, the Celtic name of Minerva, the goddess of war, wisdom, and the liberal arts. *Beineid* is a compound word formed from *bean*, a "woman", and *eide*, "armour;" the armour-bearing woman. The Latin name, Minerva, seems to be formed from the Celtic words, *bean*, "woman," and *arma*, of "arms." This is more natural than Cicero's derivation from "minitando," threatening, or "minando," warning. Beineid, or Minerva, was a favourite divinity of the Celts; and the Irish name *Innid*, as applied to Shrovetide, would indicate that her festival was celebrated about that season of the year. From Roman mythology we learn that her festival took place about the middle of March among the Latins, and that it was celebrated with great pomp and magnificence for several days. It was a festive season of public processions, of marriages, and of every kind of amusement and enjoyment. In Ireland the idea of feasting and enjoyment is still attached to *Innid*. The Thursday next before Lent is, in the popular language, called *Diardion meith na Innide*, that is, "the fat Thursday of Innid," or of Minerva. It is also remarkable that in the Irish-speaking districts more marriages take place at this season than at any other period of the year. The feasts and the marriages are at present ascribed to the near approach of the season of Lent; but, perhaps,

like the other popular festivities of the year, they had their origin in something more remote, though now forgotten.

Mars, the god of war, must have been also specially honoured by the Druids at this season of the year, which, in the common language, bears his name, *Marta*. From him is also derived the English word March. It would appear that at this season were brought home in public procession the spoils taken in war, and which, up to that time, had been allowed to remain on the open ground in a heap, or carnan, sacred to the god of battles. Philologists are unable to give us the certain derivation of the word *carnival*, which is a popular festival of great merriment in some Celtic countries, and takes place in Shrovetide, or *Innid*. Some say it is formed from the Latin words, *caro vale*, "farewell meat." It is more likely that it had its origin in the festival of Mars. The French name *carnaval*, and the Italian *carnavale*, resemble much the Celtic words *carna-a-vbaille*, which mean, "the booty to home," or the hauling home of the spoils. "In corrupt Latin," says Du-Cange, "it was called *carne-levamen*, and in Spanish *carnes tollendas*." These names imply the removal, or the taking away, of the *carna*, *carne*, and *carnes*, whatever was originally meant by them. I believe they were the Celtic *carna*, or spoils of war, which had been, according to Druidical rule,

allowed to remain after the battle in the carnan, or sacred heap, and which now, at this season dedicated to Mars, and Minerva, were brought home with rejoicing, in public procession.

From the monuments, sacrifices, and religious anniversaries of the Druids we now pass to the character and qualifications of the Druids themselves. These men are universally reputed to have been very learned, and to have possessed great influence among their people. By the ancient writers they are divided into several classes, such as the Vacerri, the Eubages, the Saronidæ, and the Bardi. These curious names were evidently manufactured by foreigners from the Celtic language itself. The Vacerri were the *Saggairt*, that is, the priests; the Eubages were the *Oubihe* or *Ubhehe*, that is, the "wise men of the serpent," or serpent's egg, by which were meant the astrologers, diviners, and soothsayers; the Saronidæ were the *Arain*, that is, the judges; and the Bardi were the *Baird*, that is, the poets and chroniclers. Their offices were various. As we have already seen, the root of the word *sacairt*, or *saggart*, is *sadh*, to "cut," and *cri*, "the heart;" from the office which required of them to pierce the heart of the victim. The root of *ubhehe* is *ubh*, or *oub*, the serpent's egg, or the coiled serpent, which they wore on the breast. "The root of *Arn*, a judge, seems to be *adhradh*, "prayer or adoration," and *an*, "a man," that is,

a man of prayer, or, in other words, a Druidical priest. And of *Bard*, the root seems to be, *bagh*, "a word," and *ard*, "noble," or high; for he used noble or fine language. Some derive it from the Hebrew word, *bardam*, "to modulate;" but, perhaps, *bardam* itself comes from the Celtic root, *bagh-ard*.

Each class had its special department and peculiar field of labours. But it appears that, in addition to the usual functions of the sacerdotal office, the members of the priesthood were charged with the education of the youth of the nobility, and the higher classes. "They teach," says Cæsar, "their pupils many things concerning the stars, and their motions; concerning the size of the world, and its different parts." Their schools were much frequented here by native and foreign pupils, to whom they imparted their own knowledge of the arts and sciences. Their knowledge of astronomy, mechanics, and medicine was very considerable. In the other departments the members were equally clever. The judge should know the law, which was never consigned to writing. It was probably the basis of the common law of modern times. The astrologer should know all the mystic means by which the will of the gods could be ascertained; and the bard should have his piece of verse or prose ready for every important object, and every stirring occasion. Upon, almost, all subjects the know-

ledge and instruction of the Druids were conveyed to their pupils in rhyme. The number of verses with which the memory was, in this way, burthened, is stated to have been prodigious. But the training and education of the Druid himself, and of the young aspirants to his office, far surpassed in severity anything to which ordinary pupils were subjected. His educational course occupied twenty years of the most intense intellectual application. The discipline of both body and mind were equally severe. Twenty years of retirement and study with their masters, in caves and in the recesses of the forest, were well calculated to try the endurance of both mind and muscle, and, also, the sincerity of the dispositions with which they aspired to the high office. Even still in Ireland there lingers the conviction that the educational training of the old Druid was no trifle, as appears by the following popular lines :—

Seacht mblian do ceart fe leac a dting feihey—
Gan bheaha gean bhlas, act an tart ad shior ceasa.
Dlighe arain do ceact, is an araidh do vbearla,
Is ma vmarrir le teact,
Beir seal ad Dhroi, beidir.

The following is the verbal and literal translation :—

" Seven years your right, under a flag-stone in a quagmire,
Without food, without taste, but the thirst you ever torturing.

The law of the judge your lesson, and prayer your language ;
And if you live to return,
You will be, for a time, a Druid, perhaps."

That was surely a severe code which prescribed a seven years' fast, prayer, and study, in such circumstances, and still ensured to the recipient of all this discipline only the consolation that he may possibly be, for a time, a wise man of the oak. But, likely, the ardent Celtic popular imagination has added a little from itself to the reality of the process, especially, as the words would seem to refer to some ambitious aspirant, not highly distinguished for the possession of any great natural abilities.

The order of astrologers was held in very high repute among the Druidical nations. These men drew their knowledge of futurity from the changing aspect of the heavenly bodies, from the flights of birds, from the appearance of the sacrificed victims, and from innumerable other circumstances. It was under their guidance and encouragement the first Scythian colonies quitted the barren regions of the north, and pushed their way, through almost insurmountable difficulties, to the genial latitudes and smiling valleys of the south. Indeed, among all Pagan nations, whether young or old, the diviner was considered an important and almost indispensable personage. But, perhaps, Druidism was the very parent of

astrology and divination. The ancient Greeks and Romans had their oracles and sibyls. These two words are quite familiar to the readers of the old classics; and yet, even the learned are unable to give of them a satisfactory derivation. The language of the Druids seems to supply the deficiency. Sibyl, in Latin, *sibylla*, is formed from *suil-bheil*, which means "the eye of the mouth;" or "the eye-mouth," that is, "the eye that sees, and the mouth that announces future events." Even in Scripture, those who foretold future events were called seers. The Latin word, *oraculum*, "oracle," appears to be the literal representative, in that language, of the Celtic words *suil-bheil*, that is, *oris-oculus*, "the eye of the mouth." Sibyl and oracle thus appear to be the same, both in the words and in the meaning, and, also, to be derived from a Druidical source. It appears that females were, at one time, admitted to the order or fraternity of the Druids, and that they were appointed to fill certain offices in connexion with the oracles or *suil-bheil*. Hence, the name of *sibyl* or *sibylla*, of the Latins. A female of this class was called a *bean-draoi*, that is, "a woman Druid;" and by the name was meant a priestess, prophetess, or enchantress.

Some vestiges of the ancient divination and wonder-working can still be traced in the customs and language of the people of this country. Fortune-telling still lives, though con-

fined to the few knaves who practise it, and the silly dupes by whom it is accepted. The fairy of the inexhaustible purse of gold is known to be walking abroad; but no one can capture him. The Banshee, or supernatural wailer, is reported as having been often seen in her white robes, by lonely stream and in deep valley, announcing in the mournful tones of the native caoine, or funeral wail, the approaching death of some worthy member, young or old, of the ancient respectable families. The word fairy is formed from the Celtic *fear-si*, which means "a man of the supernatural world," from *fear*, "a man" and *si*, (pronounced *shee*), "the mysterious world." *Banshee* means "a woman of the supernatural life," from *bean*, "a woman," and *si*, "the supernatural existence." In the Irish language, a male fortune-teller is called *fear-feasa*, "a man of knowledge," and a female of the craft, *bean-feasa*, "a woman of knowledge." This knowledge is understood to be derived from some supernatural or mysterious source. Even some of the old Druidical cabalistic expressions used in evoking, or calling up, the spirit of divination, still exist; such, for instance, as *cuith-an-puca*, that is, "the spright, or the hobgoblin, to you!" This expression is preserved in England among the divining craft, as "hobble in, goblin!" and "hocus pocus!" These latter words seem to be a sort of barbarous Latin form of the Celtic expression, and are

easily resolved into *huc est pocus*, that is, "here is the pooka, or the hobgoblin," the old enchanter's wonder-working spirit. Perhaps it is he that is turning and rapping the tables for some believers at present.

With the Druids medicine was an important branch of study. The names of the different plants and herbs in Irish are derived from the Druids; and these names indicate the healing, or medicinal, qualities for which they were distinguished. Thus, plantain is, in Irish, called *slan-lus*, from *slan*, "healthy," and *lus*, "an herb," that is, the healing herb. To herbal medicine was chiefly confined all the curing code of the Druids. When this failed, they had recourse to charms and spells. For an extreme emergency of this kind they had their *si-adhradh-na-fuilla*, that is, the prayer or adoration (charm) of the blood; their *si-adhradh-na-peiste*, that is, the prayer, or adoration, (charm) of the worm; and in the same way, *a si-adhradh*, or "charm," for every evil, accident, or disease, to which man or beast was liable. By these means they pretended to be able to stop the blood, kill the worm, or produce any other desirable effect where natural remedies had failed. *Si-adhradh* (pronounced *shee-arah*), means, literally, "the fairy, or supernatural prayer." From *si-adhradh* are formed "*charme*," of the French, and "charm," of the English, and also *Siren*.

It is a singular fact that some of these charms are still preserved, and, even, sometimes used in defiance of time, change, and advanced civilization. Even the traditional knowledge of the medicinal qualities of certain herbs still prevails among the people. This knowledge is sometimes reduced to practice by certain experienced persons; but the want of proper discrimination makes it, often, more detrimental than useful to the health. It is, however, to be expected that the results were far different in the professional hands of the Druid.

The mechanical skill of the Druids, as displayed in the number and magnitude of their monumental remains, has excited the wonder and astonishment of ages. I was present at the erection of the Luxhur Obelisk in Paris, and yet, I think that I would have felt greater emotion and surprise if I had witnessed the successful performance of the old Celtic engineer who placed on its three pedestals of stone the enormous rock which constitutes the Druidical altar here at Castle-Mary, near Cloyne. The most stupendous remains of this order in the western countries of the ancient Celts are, perhaps, Carnach, in France, and Stonehenge, in England. The former consists of four hundred stones, varying from five to twenty-seven feet in height, and ranged in eleven concentric lines. The latter contains one hundred and thirty-nine

stones, of an enormous size, forming a circle. Carnach is a compound word formed from *cairn*, "Druidical altars," and *achadh*, "a field," that is, "the field or plain of the Druidical altars." It is to be regretted that the original Celtic name of Stonehenge has not been preserved. By the common people of this country, our enormous Druidical remains are ascribed to some imaginary beings, whom they designate by the name of "the giants of old." And, certainly, they were giants in the mechanical art.

The bards exercised great influence, and enjoyed high privileges, among their countrymen. They were divided into several classes, of which the principal were the poets, the historians, the antiquaries, the genealogists, and minstrels. The favourite instrument of the Celtic minstrels was the harp, which was supposed to have been the invention of their chief god, Mercury, and which, perhaps, from this circumstance, became, at an early period, one of the national emblems of Erin. It was played on by almost every man and woman having any pretensions to polite education among the Celts. Music was believed to be of divine origin. One of its names in the Celtic is *oirfeadacht*, from *oir*, "beautiful," and *fead*, "a whistle." The harmonized or modulated whistle was, certainly, the first species of music, as it is, even now, and ever will be, the most general in grove, field, and hamlet. From this

Celtic word, *oirfeadacht*, "music," was, probably, formed the name of the famous Orpheus of the ancient poets, whose lute or lyre charmed savage beasts, and even the gruff sentinels of the infernal regions. The duties of the bard were almost as various as the scenes of human existence. He presided at the festive board, to contribute to the general hilarity by his vocal or instrumental talent; and he was present on the field of battle, to cheer and encourage the warriors, to sketch the bloody fray in words of fire, and prepare an enduring record of all the heroic actions. Tacitus states that from the bard's words and gestures on these occasions were drawn omens, and signs, which exercised a powerful influence on the minds of the men, and thus, often, decided the fate of the coming battle. Lucan, another ancient writer, alludes to this portion of the duties of the bards in the following terms, which are a translation of the original Latin :—

> You, too, ye bards! whom sacred raptures fire,
> To chant your heroes to your country's lyre;
> Who consecrate in your immortal strain,
> Brave patriot souls in freedom's battle slain.

The bards survived the fall of the Druidism of which they formed an important order. Poetry, history, and music were, if possible, cultivated with, even, greater ardour under the

influence of Christianity; and for centuries, their ancient honours and privileges were enjoyed in their plenitude by the successors and representatives of the old Druidical bards. They even survived the reign of Elizabeth, when severe edicts were hurled againt them for endeavouring, by music and song, to keep alive the sentiments of national independence. Till 1746 the bards of Munster continued to hold their half-yearly sessions at Bruree of the Kings, in the county of Limerick, since which period, bard after bard has disappeared, leaving scarcely the shadow of a successor to represent him.

The Druids enjoyed great immunities and privileges among their people. "They are," says Cæsar, "wont to be absent from war, and pay no tributes like the rest; the law exempting them from military service, and granting them immunity in all things." Among the Celtic nations the person of the Druid was always sacred and inviolable. This was even the case with respect to the Bard who was captured while encouraging his warriors in the midst of the conflict. The Romans, however, did not recognise the rule; for when they found him in the ranks of the enemy, they often consigned him to, even, a worse fate than that of the rest of the captives.

Like the Bards, the Arain, or Judges, also survived the fall of the Druidical system. They

had for successors and representatives those who, in English, are called Brehons, from the Celtic word, *breathamh*, (pronounced *breahuv*), which means "a judge." Through many vicissitudes, and for many ages, these continued to dispense justice, and enforce the old laws of the country, till the national customs and institutions at length fell prostrate under the power of England.

As we have already seen, the name Aran, is formed from *adhradh*, "adoration or prayer," and *an*, "man." Could the name of Aaron in Scripture be derived from the same root? And their decisions were received with great respect by the people. Even Chief Baron Finglas, who wrote in the interest of England in the reign of Henry VIII., bears testimony to this fact, in such a way, as to contrast it with the want of respect for English law within the Pale. "It is a great abuse and reproach," he says, "that the laws and statutes made in this land are not observed, nor kept after the making of them eight days, while divers Irishmen doth observe and keep such laws and statutes, which they make upon hills in their country, firm and stable, without breaking them for any favour or reward." By a statute of a Parliament held at Kilkenny, it was made high treason to administer or observe these old Brehon laws. *Gabhail-cinne* and *Eiric* were specially obnoxious.

Gabhail-cinne (anglicized Gavelkind), was the law by which the land of a family belonged to all the members of the family, and descended from the father in equal proportions, to all his sons, and to his daughters, in the same way, when there were no sons. The word is formed from *gabhail*, "prize, or booty," and *cinne*, "tribe, or family." Tanistry was the law or custom by which a chief or prince was elected by the tribe to succeed the ruling prince when death should deprive them of his counsel and presence. The chief should belong to the royal family. He was not, however, to succeed by age, or primogeniture, but was elected by general suffrage. A remote member of the chief's family was, often, the object of the people's favour and selection. He was then styled Tanaiste, that is, the thane, or chief, of death, from *tann*, "a chief," and *ais*, "death," as he was to succeed at the death of the actual ruler.

Eiric was the law by which a certain fine, large and heavy in proportion to the rank of the slain, was to be paid for murder, or manslaughter. Eiric seems to be formed from *eire*, "burthen," and *ic*, "death."

The Druid was, in all the relations of life, a most important personage among his people. He was their priest, their prophet, their judge, their bard, and physician. By his profession he was exempted from taxes and the obligation of

arms. But when an enemy invaded his country, as in the case of the Romans against Gaul and Britain, he hesitated not to fling himself into the ranks of the combatants, or, even, to take the command, where another worthy leader was wanting, or slain.

In each Celtic country there was an *Ard-draoi*, that is, "an Arch, or High-Druid," who exercised a supreme authority over the whole order, as well as over their professional and religious functions. On the occasion of his death, if there happened to be another Druid among them, of great ability and transcendent merits, he was at once elected, by the common consent of the brethren, to fill the vacant office. But when there were many of equal merits and attainments, the choice was not so easy; and, sometimes, the selection was not made without tumult, violence, and even bloodshed. It was this Arch-Druid who presided at the great annual council which was held for the regulation of the affairs of their order, and the final settlement of cases of dispute or disagreement, among their people. It is believed that at Uisneach, in Meath, this council was held every year, at first, and that it subsequently led to the great meeting of priests, nobles, bards, and warriors, at the famous periodical convocation of the nation, "at Tara of the Kings."

A natural curiosity is felt here to know

something about the personal appearance and ordinary dress of the Druid. If he appeared like the rest of his countrymen, the Celts, he wore the long-flowing hair, called the *glib*, which hung loosely on the shoulders or on the breast, or the same hair twisted on the poll into an ornamental knot, called the *culin* (pronounced *cooleen*), and the tuft of beard called the *crom-bheal*, which adorned the upper lip under the nose. The lower chin was shaved, but, perhaps, not the side-face. At least, it is so on heads introduced into a rich cornice on the Round Tower of Devenish. *Glib* seems to be a primitive word signifying a lock or coil of hair. *Culin* means the diminished, or tied up, poll; from *cul*, "the poll," and *in*, or *een*, "small." Or, perhaps, it is formed from *cul*, "the poll," and *lin*, "threads, or ringlets." *crombheal* (pronounced *cromveeal*), appears to be an expressive compound word formed from *crom*, "bent, or arched," and *beal*, "mouth," that is, "the arched mouth," and by it was meant the hair-adorned upper lip, which was the moustache of modern times. Among the Celts the long-flowing locks were highly prized; and, often even, did the possession of them by a candidate influence the choice of the people when they were electing their military chief, or their monarch. These two words, *glib* and *culin* ("culeen") still live among us in song, and story; for it required many a severe edict and many an age

of repression to compel the Irish Celt to abandon these national appendages of his person for what was called in the language of the statute, "the English dress and fashion." It appears, however, that the Druids, like the Jewish priests, wore the full beard, and that their dress, too, differed, in some particulars, from that of the other two classes of the state, namely, the nobles and the common people. At least, when officiating at sacrifice, they wore a white tunic, probably of linen; while a many-coloured, or variegated tunic, formed the ordinary dress of their countrymen. The favourite colours for the Celtic dress, were the yellow, the red, and the blue. As the Celts were close observers and devoted worshippers of the heavenly bodies, and as they, even, claimed for themselves a celestial origin, it is thought that their predilection for these colours was derived from what we term the golden morning, the purple evening, and the deep blue sky. The tunic was a large and long outer body-dress, which was bound round the waist with a girdle, or cincture, called a *crios*. These girdles, being sometimes embroidered, and sometimes fringed with gold, and going round the body and the breast two or three times, formed a most ornamental part of the Celtic dress. From the Celtic word, *crois-aill* "the noble or beautiful cincture," have been formed *cyrtel* of the Saxons, and *girdle* of the English. The

females wore girdles, too, round their peculiar tunics. It appears that the priests were clad in the usual close-fitting under-dress, or breeches, reaching in one piece from the waist to the soles of the feet. To all these the nobles and wealthy classes added ornaments of massive gold for the neck and shoulders, and bracelets of the same material for the arms and wrists. From this, even imperfect description, one can easily infer that the full dress of the Celt and of the Druid was both graceful and picturesque.

The large and loose tunic of the Celts, was the garment called by the name of shirt in the English statutes, and against which these statutes contained several curious penal enactments. Of course, it was only with certain peculiarities, such as size, colour, and cost, they pretended to find fault; but the real object was to abolish the distinctive national dress, and through it, the national character. Colour was an important feature of the ancient Celtic costume. By it and its various shades, caste, class, condition, and profession, were marked and indicated among the people. Blue was the usual colour of the serfs and tillers of the soil, yellow of the aristocracy, and red of the kings and princes. Those who belonged to the order of the Druids, whether priests, judges, or bards, were privileged to wear the most honourable colour in all its variety of shade and ornament.

The scarlet was also the badge of the ladies. And to that colour the fair sex in Ireland clung with inflexible tenacity for centuries after the English invasion. Nothing could induce them to exchange the graceful red cloak and simple head dress of their country, for the foreign garb, of which the capacious old bonnet constituted a prominent feature. Even at this day a fair face and bright eye are often seen under the scarlet hood, in remote parts of Ireland, which the stern barrier of moor and mountain had long protected against the influence of foreign ideas.

About six hundred years before the birth of Christ, a Druid from one of these western islands visited Greece, and the description given of his person and dress by some of the Greek writers is very interesting. The name of this Druid-traveller was Abaris, a word which signifies the father, or master, of knowledge; from *ab*, "father," and *airis*, "knowledge." This title was something like that of Rabbi among the Jews; and, even in sound, it resembles it somewhat. This priest of the sun, as he is called, went to Greece for the purposes of study and observation; and also to renew, by his personal presence and his gifts, the old friendship which, it appears, had existed for ages, between the Greeks and the Celts. By the Greeks he was called a Hyperborean, that is, a northern, a term which they applied to the Celtic nations bordering on the

Euxine, and also to the colonies or peoples sprung from them and inhabiting northern latitudes. The Greek writer, Strabo, says that Abaris was much admired by even the learned men of Greece, for his politeness, justice, and integrity. "He came to Athens," says Himerius, another Greek writer, "not clad in skins, like a Scythian, but with a bow in his hand, and a quiver hanging on his shoulders, and a plaid wrapped about his body, a gilded belt encircling his loins, and trousers reaching from the waist down to the soles of his feet. He was easy in his address, agreeable in his conversation, active in the despatch, and secret in the management of great affairs; quick in judging of present occurrences, and ready to take his party in any sudden emergency; provident, withal, in guarding against futurity: diligent in quest of wisdom; fond of friendship; trusting very little to fortune; yet having the entire confidence of others, and trusted with everything for his prudence. He spoke Greek with so much fluency that you would have thought that he had been bred, or brought up, in the Lyceum, and had conversed all his life with the academy of Athens."

Such is the singularly flattering character which the Greek writers give of this Druid-traveller, from the Hyperborean island. They, also, state that he had frequent interviews with Pythagoras, whom he astonished by the variety and

extent of his knowledge. Now, to which of these northern Celtic, or Hyperborean, islands did Abaris belong? The place of his abode is thus described by Greek writers, whose imperfect knowledge of geography, however, rendered it impossible for them to be very accurate in all particulars:—"It is the place where Latona was born, lying *far north of Celtica and as big as Sicily*, the inhabitants of which *enjoy a temperate air* and *a very fruitful soil.* They adore Apollo and the Sun, preferably to all other deities, paying him the highest honours, and singing his praises so continually, that they all seemed to be priests appropriated to his service, and their town itself dedicated to his worship. There was a fine grove and circular temple, consecrated to him, in which choirs of his votaries say hymns, celebrating his actions, and set to music; whilst others, playing *on the harp, which most of the inhabitants understood*, answered to their voices, and formed a delightful symphony. They *had a peculiar dialect of their own*, and a singular regard for the Greeks, particularly the Athenians and Delleans, with whom they had, from ancient times, cultivated a friendship, confirmed by mutual visits, which, however, as they had been intermitted for some time, Abaris was sent by the Hyperboreans to renew, and, in return, several of the Greeks, passing to their island, left there several sacred presents to their deities, with inscriptions in Greek characters."

Several features noticed in this description, such as the size and situation of the island, the worship of the sun, the use of the harp, its position beyond Celtic Gaul, and the peculiar language spoken by the people, evidently point to Erin, as the residence of this "father, or master, of knowledge" who had travelled into Greece. Still, English writers claim him for England, and perhaps the Scotch, too, for their own country. For want of knowledge of the Celtic tongue these writers have not been able to give the meaning of the name Abaris; and I believe that they have equally failed in establishing their national claims to the distinguished Druid who bore it. In any case, the three countries, which all belonged to the great Celtic family, may well afford to share the honour between them. Tacitus states that the harbours and ports of Ireland were better known to foreigners than those of Britain; a fact which may, perhaps, shed some light on this subject; whilst, to any candid reader, it is manifest that the size of Sicily corresponds better with that of Ireland than with the far larger island comprising England, Scotland, and Wales. The knowledge of the Greek language, which Abaris possessed in an eminent degree, throws no particular light on his nationality; for it appears that the study of that tongue formed an important portion of the ordinary education of the Druids. It was the language

of their correspondence and commerce with foreign nations.

At what time the Druids first came to Ireland is not known. It is possible that some members of the order arrived there in the train of the most early colonies. From its connexion with Druidism, Ireland has derived its most ancient and enduring names. *Eirinn*, or *Erinn*, is a compound word, formed from *i*, (pronounced *ee*) "an island," and *arain*, "of the judges," that is, as the name *Aran* imports, the island of the men of prayer and adoration, or of the Druidical legislators. *Ierne*, or *Iarne*, another very ancient name of Ireland, from which is evidently formed Hibernia, with its many variations, is a compound of *i*, "an island," and *earneadh*," "propagation of knowledge;" from the fact, perhaps, that to it resorted, for instruction, foreign students and scholars, in the Druidical times. Or, this name may have been formed from *i*, "an island," and *shiar*, "west," that is, the western island. It is more likely, however, that the name referred to it as a school of knowledge; and that to it flocked the greater number of those, who, as Cæsar says, went from Gaul and other countries to Britain to be educated by the Druids. The name of Inisfail, is also ascribed to the Druids, as being derived from the presence of the Liafail, or stone of the king, called the stone of destiny, which they had brought with them to Ireland. Inis-

fail, however, means the island of the king, from *inis*, "an island," and *fal*, "a king;" because from the earliest ages, Ireland was under one supreme monarch, who exercised authority over the provincial kings and princes. Britain was differently circumstanced in this respect, as having its several independent petty monarchs, or kings. It would appear that the name Britain is formed from *Breith*, "a compact, or confederacy," and *tan*, "land," that is, the land of confederacy, or the confederated states. Some derive it from *Britanach*, which means a painted or coloured man, from *brit*, "spotted," and *an*, "man." They painted their clothes and the naked parts of their bodies in various lively colours. Thus, they are said to have been the Picti, or Picts. The name Picts, was, however, more probably derived from *fich*, a "fee-farm," and thus meant the feudal men, or clansmen. The Celtic name of Alba was given to that part of Britain now called Scotland, from *alb*, "a height." It was an abbreviation of "Britane-alba," that is, the heights, or high parts of the land of the confederated states, or of the painted or coloured people, just as Wales was called *Britane-eisg*, that is, the watery parts of the land of confederation. Cymry comes from *comara*, "deep valleys." Some derive it from Gomer, son of Japheth, son of Noe. The name of Albion is erroneously derived from the Latin, *albus*, "white," as referring to its white

chalk cliffs. It, manifestly, comes from *Alba*, the Celtic name of the heights of Britain. Some, however, derive it from *aṭl*, "stones," and *ban*, "white."

In even Pagan times Ireland was called by foreigners, *Insula Sacra*, or the Sacred Isle; a title which it clearly derived from its own Celtic names, *Eirinn* and *Ierne*, which meant the island of the learned Druids, and of knowledge.

Like the ancient sages and philosophers of other countries, the Druids were fond of travel. As others came to Ireland in search of knowledge, many went from Ireland to foreign places for the same object. Between the Druids of Erin and those of Britain and Gaul, a constant communication was maintained. A few hours' sail brought the bark of the Gallic student to the shores of Britain, which, at the nearest points, only a little more than a dozen miles separated from the more western sacred Isle. In the Irish Sea, and close to that part of Britain now called Wales, stands the Isle of Anglesey, which formerly was called *Mona* or more properly, *Muineadh-i* (pronounced *moon-ah-ee.*) Here was a high training school, which was the great international seminary of the Druids of the west. From this circumstance the isle derived its name of *Muineadh-i*, which means "the island of teaching," from *muineadh*, "teaching," and *i*, "an island." It was the last

resting place of the Druids of Britain, when the Roman legions had driven them out of the main land for having encourged resistance to the foreign invasion; and when the vengeance of the enemy again pursued them to that secluded retreat, those who were able to escape the sword were compelled to fly, in their boats, to the shores of Ireland. The Druids are gone, and the Roman legions have passed away. Still, in that island, there are yet remaining many striking memorials of its ancient character. It has the Druidical circle, the cairn, the cromleacht, and the dhallawn; and it was not without a struggle it parted with its ancient name, which, however, clings to the now famous strait which separates it from the mainland.

From whence the Druids first came to Ireland we know not, though they can, themselves, be traced to the east as the place that gave their doctrines birth. It appears that ancient Chaldea was the cradle of Druidism. In language and customs, in rites and ceremonies, these priests of the Celts closely resembled the peculiar Pagan people of whom the ancient Scriptures frequently speak as existing in that country. In reference to them, Baal and his worship are often mentioned as a great danger, and in terms of reprobation. This Beal, as the Celtic word means, was the universal being, or god, of the Druids. There is also mention in Scripture of Moloch,

which was an idol or god of the Phœnicians. Moloch seems to be a Celtic word formed from *mo*, great, or chief, and *logh*, god; by which was, probably, meant Mercury, or the Sun. Eastern writers tell us that, to this divinity human victims were sacrificed by enclosing them in the hollow arms and legs of a huge image of brass or copper, which was then exposed to the severe action of fire. This was, manifestly, the prototype and model of the ozier images used for the same purpose by the Druids of Gaul. It would, even, appear that Druidism was the first great permanent error which broke off from the primitive divine revelation made to man. Its sacrifices were an imitation, or perversion of the sacrifices of the patriarchs, with the single exception of the human victim, which, probably, was suggested by some shadowy and false notions respecting the promised future atonement in behalf of a fallen race. Even the "stones of adoration" of the Druids and their "libation stones" would appear to be an imitation of the rude stone-altars erected, for sacrifice, on hill and in valley, by the ancient patriarchs. Doubtless, it was from these primitive traditions Druidism derived its belief in the existence of a Supreme Being, and in the immortality of the soul. We have already seen that the *suil-beal*, that is, the sibyl, or oracle, was an institution of the Druids.

This, too, was an imitation, or perversion of what, among the Hebrews, or Jews, was understood by the simple designation of consulting the Lord. It is stated that some of these oracles, or sibyls, uttered matters in connexion with the life of the future Redeemer, and with the day of judgment. By some these utterances are regarded as the pious frauds and fabrications of a subsequent age. It is, however, possible, that these fragments of an original revelation might have been preserved by tradition among the Druids, and that, for some special object, either to excite awe or create astonishment, they might have been made to pass through the channel of the *suil-beal*, or the sibyl's prophecy. "Balaam," that is, the man of Baal, as the name imports, in all probability, belonged to this Pagan order, or profession; and he uttered a singular prophesy in the same direction. The Witch of Endor, who is called the serpent, after the serpent-worship, was, likely, too, a member of the Druidical order, and a sort of priestess. Even there are those who think that the wise men, who came to worship the infant Saviour, were Druids, or pontiff-princes of that order, in their own country. They are called in scripture *Magi*, a name, which, if traced to a Celtic root, would mean the wise men of the plain, from *magh*, "a plain," and *i* (pronounced *ee*) "wise or learned." They

were close observers of the heavenly bodies, and made the laws of the universe, and of morals, a particular study. Perhaps the name was formed from *maighne*, "great," and *i* "wise," the great wise man. From whatever cause it arose, the Druids were far from being the most obstinate of the Pagans in accepting the doctrines of Christianity. No doubt, their belief in the existence of a Supreme Being, and in the immortality of the human soul, together with any other fragments of the original revelation which might have been preserved amongst them, greatly facilitated their conversion. We collect from the ancient writings and the traditions of Ireland, that the Druids had absolutely foretold the arrival of the Christian Missionaries a long time before they had come to this country. It is certain, at all events, that distinguished members of the order were among the first converts to Christianity here, and that by their learning and influence, they much contributed to the success of, even, Saint Patrick himself, in extending the true religion, and in erecting churches to the worship of the true God, all over the island.

CHAPTER III.

THE ANCIENT CHURCHES OF IRELAND.

WHEN THE FIRST CHRISTIAN MISSIONARIES CAME TO IRELAND, CHRISTIANITY HAD IN OTHER PLACES PASSED THROUGH A PERSECUTION OF THREE HUNDRED YEARS.—WHERE THE FAITHFUL MET FOR PRAYER DURING THAT TIME.—THE ANCIENT CHURCHES OF IRELAND RESEMBLE THE ANCIENT CHURCHES OF GREECE.—THE ANCIENT CHURCHES BUILT EAST AND WEST, WITH THE ALTAR IN THE EAST END, LIKE THOSE OF GREECE.—THE DEAD BURIED NEAR THE CHURCHES ON THE SOUTH SIDE.—FACES OF THE DEAD TOWARDS THE ALTAR AND THE EAST.—FORM, MASONRY, DOORS, WINDOWS, AND ARCHITECTURAL PECULIARITIES OF THE ANCIENT CHURCHES.—IRISH NAMES OF CHURCHES.—THEIR MEANING, AND FROM WHAT SOURCE DERIVED.—DEARTHEACH, THE HOUSE OF TEARS, AND THE PUBLIC PENANCES.—CHIEF STATIONS OF PUBLIC PENANCES.—REMAINS OF THEM STILL EXISTING.—AFRIONN, OR AFRIONN DE, THE ANCIENT IRISH NAME FOR THE MASS; ITS MEANING.—THE NAMES, BAILE, CLUAIN, AND CILL, AND WHAT THEY MEAN.—THE AGE OF THE ANCIENT CHURCHES AN AGE OF LEARNING.—FOREIGN STUDENTS CAME TO IRELAND, AND IRISH MISSIONARIES WENT TO FOREIGN COUNTRIES.—CHIEF SCHOOLS OF LEARNING IN IRELAND.—THE SCHOOLS DESTROYED BY THE DANES, AND ALSO THE CHURCHES.—THE CELE-DE, OR CULDEE.—THE FAMOUS IRISH ARCHITECT, GOBAN SAOR, HIS CLEVERNESS, AND THE TRADITIONS STILL EXISTING IN HIS REGARD.

WHEN the first Christian Missionary came to Ireland to plant the truths of the Gospel in the waste or perverted minds of its Pagan people, Christianity had, already, in other places, passed through a persecution of three hundred years.

During that glorious, but stern and dreary period, the Christians had neither temples, churches, nor chapels for the performance of their worship, except in very few favoured places, and within the fitful short intervals of peace. For prayer and for the celebration of the mysteries of their religion, they were compelled to assemble, stealthily, in the private houses of fellow-believers, in the caves of the rocks, and, very often, in the caverns, or spacious tombs of the dead. Whether it was owing to the silent attraction of sorrow, or to the love and veneration entertained for those who had died for the faith, the dark abodes of the dead were their favourite meeting places. From the early Christian writers we learn that a movable wooden altar, somewhat hollow on the upper surface, after the pattern of the altar of the Mosaic Arc, was carried to these places, and that on it were performed the mysteries, or sacred rites, of their religion.

After the conversion to Christianity of the Emperor Constantine, this persecution ceased. The Christians were then allowed the free exercise of their religion, with permission, even, to erect edifices for the public performance of their worship. The places where they had formerly assembled for that purpose were regarded by them with a peculiar veneration, and there, according to favouring circumstances,

they erected the house, or the structure, destined for the worship of God. It was thus that so many of the early churches rose up in the cemeteries over the graves and the tombs of the martyrs.

These early churches in other lands served as models for the first houses dedicated to the Christian worship in Ireland. It has been remarked that the early Irish churches resembled, in many features, the simple primitive churches of Greece. Like these, they are, invariably, built east and west, with the altar in the east end, or gable, and the entrance in the west. At the door, or entrance, was placed a font of water with which those entering the church or chapel sprinkled themselves. In facing the east at prayer, they were following the custom of the Hebrews; and by it also, they expressed a belief in the future resurrection. In Isaias, chapter xli., the Just One is expected from the east, and in Psalm lxvii. It is a curious fact, as we have already seen, that the Druids, too, faced the east at prayer and sacrifice. In an old treatise on the consecration of a church, still preserved in Ireland, and which is ascribed to the seventh or eighth century, there are laid down rules and instructions which suppose that the altar was always at the east end, and the general entrance, or door, at the west end, of the edifice. Even an older document, in the shape of a prophecy by the Druids, quoted

in the ancient life of Saint Patrick, indicates the same thing. Three years before the arrival of the saint in Ireland, it is stated that two chief Druids announced his speedy coming to the monarch Laeghaire, in the following words :—

> " A Tailcean will come over the raging sea ;
> With his perforated garment, his crooked-headed staff,
> And his table at the east end of his house."

In the Greek or Eastern Church this eastern position for the altar has been most scrupulously observed even to this day ; while in the Latin, or Western Church, it may face indifferently any point of the heavens.

Till lately this rule with respect to the position of the church was observed in Ireland with scrupulous fidelity. In the year 1575, Gerald, the great Earl of Desmond, after escaping from the keepers of his prison in Dublin Castle, rode rapidly all the way to Munster on horseback. He and his faithful follower and attendant, Gowran M'Sweeney, found it necessary to conceal themselves in the glens and woods by day, and continue the journey at night ; and it is stated that their course to the south, over hill and dale, was directed by the invariable position of the churches. The confiscations and wars of a subsequent period produced confusion and disorder in, almost, everything ; but even now the old rule for the position of a church is observed

wherever the circumstances of site and space are found to be favourable for it.

The eastern position is, in Ireland, most strictly observed in the burial of the dead. According to the general rule, or rubric, of the Church, the laity are to be buried with the face turned in the direction of the altar, while the priests, or the clergy, are to be buried in the opposite direction, that is, facing the people, or their flocks. But so universal was the rule in Ireland of having the churches and chapels built east and west, with the altar in the east end, that even now the ancient custom of burying the dead with the face to the east, is scarcely ever deviated from, in the cemetery, whatever may be the position of the altar. This rule is scrupulously observed by persons of all classes, in deference to the ancient custom of the country. Like those of the early Christians in foreign lands, the churches in Ireland were generally erected near the graves of the dead; or the dead were brought to repose near the churches. For the most part the graves are always found to be placed on one side of these ancient sacred structures, and that side was the south. Hence the Irish saying, *Is mo la bheig aguinn air thaob han teampuil;* "Many a day we shall have on the side of the church." Even at present, there seems to be some reluctance on the part of the people to bury their dead on

the north side. From what does this arise? It was only on the south side there were any windows, or apertures for light and air in these old churches; and it is surmised that the people wished to have the graves of their dead in view from the church, that they might, so far, hold with them a communion of sympathy and prayer. Perhaps, also, this position on the right of the priest and of the altar was intended to express the hope that they would be found on the right hand of Christ, at the last day, to receive a favourable judgment. There was, certainly, something very touching and suggestive in these old churches; the living worshiping inside, and their dead reposing outside, with their faces to the east, awaiting the great Resurrection.

Compared with modern edifices, these ancient structures were, in architectural details and in size, of very modest pretensions. We have no proof that churches of a circular, or circular-polygonal, form, were erected in Ireland as in other Christian countries. Some think that there were such here, but that under the influence of time and change, all vestiges of them have disappeared. These oval structures have been found in the Eastern and Western countries of Christendom; and, even, in Abyssinia some of the same form were discovered on the occasion of the late English expedition

against the empire of Theodore. By them it was intended to represent and perpetuate the old idea of the Temple, that is, of the round structure dedicated to divine worship. If they ever existed in Ireland they have wholly disappeared; and the oldest sacred structures now remaining are of the quadrangular form. These are generally of an oblong shape, varying from sixty to eighty feet in length, and from twelve to sixteen feet in breadth. Even there are many of still smaller dimensions; but, perhaps, these latter are to be regarded as private oratories or chapels, and not as public churches. It is stated in the Life of St. Patrick, that the original Cathedral of Armagh was one hundred and forty feet long. Few, however, of even the Episcopal Churches approached to that magnitude.

While, in most of these old churches, the edifice consisted of a plain single quadrangle, there were some that had a prolongation or section, running or extending to the east, and constituting the chancel, or place for the altar and clergy, and which was connected with the main house by a triumphal arch of a semi-circular form. The walls of these houses, generally about twelve feet high, were composed of stones, with, and sometimes without, lime cement. The walls were always perpendicular, and generally formed of large polygonal, or

many-sided, stones, carefully fitted to each other on the inner and outer surfaces. The centre of the walls was filled, or packed up, with rubble and grouting. The material of the roofs consisted of timber, covered over with straw, flags, heath, rushes, or shingles. In many instances, especially with respect to the smaller churches, the roofs were entirely of stones, or stone flags, continued up to the apex of the roof, in diminished series, from the perpendicular walls.

The windows and doors were of very simple form, and of small dimensions. If these, in their plainness, can be said to possess any architectural style, it is of somewhat a confused or varied character. And, yet, the general features appear to have been produced according to some common model. The door, invariably placed in the middle of the west gable, had a square head formed by a horizontal stone lintel, often running through the breadth of the wall. The height of the doors varied from five to six feet six inches high, and their breadth from two feet ten inches to three feet six inches. For the most part the doorways were wider at the bottom than at the top, as their sides inclined; and they were generally formed of very massive stones. In many instances a cross was inscribed on the outer surface of the stone lintel. The east window was of a semi-circular form, the

head of the arch being sometimes composed of a single cut stone, and sometimes of two hollowed stones meeting at the apex. Where there was a chancel, or sanctuary, distinct from the body of the edifice, it had, on the south side, one or two windows of, generally, an angular shape, the heads being often formed by two large stones or flags, inclining to each other at the upper edges, and running through the thickness of the wall. Sometimes these windows were of a semicircular form. The nave, or body, of the church, which was not, generally, as well lighted as the chancel, had two or three windows, sometimes of a circular, and sometimes of the angular form, and sometimes, even, of the square form, by being covered over with a horizontal stone lintel. These were all on the south side. In the chancel sometimes a window opened to the north. A window, angular-headed, or circular-headed externally, is often quadrangular internally, being there covered by a lintel. With respect to the nave, there was seldom any opening, or aperture, on the north side; a solid dead wall being opposed to the raw breezes from that quarter. It is possible that, in an age of allegory and figures, this combination and variety expressed some sacred meaning, with which we are unacquainted at present. All the windows splayed inwards for the better transmission of light, the outer edges, or reveals,

being narrow and sharp, doubtless, as a protection against the wind and rain. The sides of the windows, as well as of the door, incline, or hang in, from the perpendicular, in the form or shape of what is called *Cyclopean* building, and, thus, they are, generally, more narrow at the head than at the base. They seldom exhibit any architectural decorations.

With what materials were these apertures, or windows, protected against the storm and rain? It does not appear that there was any provision made for the insertion in them of glass, or of any similar solid substance of a transparent nature. Some think that parchment and horn might have been employed for that purpose. It is, however, more likely that they were provided with only screens of wicker-work or of boards, which might be put up, or taken down, according to the exigencies of the weather. Some of the windows splayed outwards, as well as inwards, and it is supposed that this contrivance was intended for the reception of the screens in stormy or bad weather. As candles, or lights, were always used in the church, at divine worship, the occasional closing of the windows, in this way, produced no serious inconvenience. Large stone crosses, of that which is called the Celtic, or round form, were erected near many of those old churches of the fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth centuries. These churches must have

been very numerous even at a very early period; for our ancient annals state that Saint Patrick himself founded over three hundred monasteries, consecrated about three hundred bishops, and ordained three thousand priests.

An erroneous idea prevailed at one time to the effect that, in the early periods of Christianity in this country, the Irish had neither stone-built houses, nor stone-built churches. It was even believed that they were ignorant of the use of stone and mortar for the erection of such edifices. Saint Bernard himself was led into an error of this kind. Facts, however, prove the contrary. Even in the times of the Druids, as we have seen, there were stone buildings, rude, no doubt, and perhaps without lime cement, as far as we can judge by the specimens that remain. These had not the arch; because, perhaps, the stone lintel was found to be more ready and convenient, and, for the buildings then in use, equally solid. But to suppose that the early Christians of this country, who had for religious instructors men of learning from foreign lands, continued to be ignorant of the uses of stone and mortar for building purposes, is as much against facts, as it is against universal experience. Undoubtedly wooden and wicker-work edifices were sometimes used as houses of worship here, as well as in other countries; but their presence in some places did not necessarily imply the total absence

of stone and mortar edifices elsewhere. Modern inquiry has settled the matter fully in the opposite direction.

Parts of the structures of some of the ancient churches, still remaining, are found combined with additions and improvements of a more modern date, of, perhaps, the ninth, tenth, and eleventh centuries. In some instances a new nave was added to the original building, and the whole of the old church was converted into a chancel. In other cases a new chancel was added, and the whole of the old church was made the nave, doubtless, in both cases, to give increased accomodation to both priests and people. These changes and additions are easily discerned by the difference of the masonry and the materials; the primitive building always exhibiting the Cyclopean, or irregular, laying of the stones, and the more modern portions shewing the stones laid in courses more regular.

Some minor changes and transformations, too, are noticed in these old churches. In Corkbegg, on the harbour of Queenstown, are the ruins of a very old church, not perhaps of the original type, but belonging to the second generation of these ancient edifices. It has the usual narrow windows splaying inwards. They are angular-headed externally, but quadangular internally, being there covered with lintels. The church is fifty-three feet long, and eighteen broad within

the walls. The masonry exhibits, to a considerable extent, the usual irregular laying of the stones. This old church underwent a change, or transformation, by the removal of the door from the west to the south side, and by the introduction of dressed stone into the reveals of the side windows. The jambs of the door have also chiseled stones, among which is introduced inside, to the right, the old honey-combed holy-water font which, probably, belonged to the original entrance. The east window is destroyed; but in the wall, on the right side of it, is a dressed stone corbel, on which, most likely, rested one end of the altar. That part, too, probably had its share of the general improvement, or remodelling. These changes would appear to have been effected about the year 1587; for these figures are deeply cut on a stone near the holy-water font.

It would seem, however, that it did not continue long after to be used as a house of worship. In the body of the church is now growing an ash tree, which must be two hundred years old, and which, probably, was planted there by the hand of nature after the destruction of the roof and a portion of the walls. It throws its brawny arms aloft, and looks like a sad old sentinel keeping watch and ward over the few graves and tombs that have found their way into the body of the church.

There are many names for churches in the Irish language. They are fine expressive compounds, formed from pure Celtic roots, and are, manifestly, representatives of the names which the early Christians in other countries, particularly in the East, bestowed on their churches. The general name of church, both in the east and west, was *ecclesia*, which meant the assembly of the faithful, as well as the place where they met for divine worship. To the sacred structure, however, were often given various other names. From Saint Clement of Rome, from Saint Isidore, from Tertullian and other ancient writers, we learn that among the early Christians, *ecclesia*, or the *church*, was called the "House of God," the "House of the Lord," or the "Lord's Structure," the "House of the Dove," (in reference to the Holy Ghost), and *Basilick*, the "House of the King" or of the Lord, that is, of the King of Kings, from the Greek word *basileus*, which signifies "a king." These names were suggested by various passages of the Sacred Scriptures, and especially by the words of the Patriarch Jacob, who, in reference to the spot where he had seen the wonderful vision, exclaimed, "How terrible is this place! "This is no other than the house of God and "the gate of heaven." The same ancient writers tell us that the churches were also often called the Memorials of the Martyrs, of the Apostles, of the Dead, &c., &c. It is stated that during

the first four centuries of the Church, the name of temple was seldom bestowed on these edifices, to avoid even the appearance of any connexion with Pagan practices. But when paganism disappeared, this abstention was not necessary nor observed. The following are the principal names of churches in the Irish language :—

Ceall, or Cill,
Domhnach.
Daimhliag,
Reiglios,
Eclios,
Teampull.

Ceall (pronounced *kayel*), is commonly derived from the Latin word, *cella*, which means "a cell." It is, however, a Celtic name; for, undoubtedly, the Celtic word *cai*, or *ca* which means "a house," enters into the formation of it. *Ceall* appears to be a compound word formed from *cai*, "a house," and *ell*, "a flock or multitude;" or from *cai*, "a house," and *ail*, "a stone." "The house of the flock," however, appears to be more natural than the "house of stone." The modern Irish name of a church, as, at present, used in Connaught and other parts of Ireland, is *teach pobuil*, that is, "the house of the people," or "of the congregation," which corresponds perfectly with the ancient

ceall, or "the house of the flock." At a very early period the Christian congregations had the name of flock bestowed on them, as we see by *Acts* xx. 28, where it is said—"Take heed to yourselves and to the whole flock wherein the Holy Ghost hath placed you bishops." Possibly the word *ceall*, or "house of the flock," originally meant "the house of the religious community and its chapel," while afterwards, the name passed to an isolated church or chapel in the country. As a proof that the word *cai*, "a house," enters into the formation of *ceall*, it may be stated that near Cloyne is the lone remnant of the ruins of an ancient religious establishment which is, indifferently, called *ceall-teskin*, and *tigh-teskin*. *Tigh-teskin*, means "the house of teskin;" that is, "the house either of the barren head," or "the house of the head of the water." The particular *ceall* was generally qualified or distinguished by the addition of the name of the patron saint, or of the founder, or of some local peculiarity, such as *ceall-Mhuire*, "the flock house of Mary;" *ceall-Colmain*, the flock house of Coleman;" *ceall duibh-duin*, "the flock or congregation house of the black fortress." The number of these churches must have been very great in Ireland at one time, as it would be difficult to enumerate all the places which from them are called by the name of *ceall*, or *cill*.

Another derivation would deduce the name from *cai*, "a house," and *ceal*, "heaven," the *c* in *ceal* being left out by ellipsis, as is usual in formations of the kind. This would make it in accordance with the words of the Scriptures—"house of God and gate of heaven." In the same way would the Scottish word *kirk*, be formed from *cai*, "a house," and *earc*, "heaven;" and the English word *church* would only be a variation of the original Celtic name. This derivation appears very natural and expressive.

Cill (pronounced *keel*) is generally regarded as only an inflection of the name, *ceall*. Yet, I believe they regarded different objects. *Cill* would appear to be formed from *cai*, "a house," and *il*, "of the rock;" that is, a rock residence, whether natural or artificial. This would point to the anchoretical life which great numbers embraced, in the early ages of the Church in Ireland, as well as in other countries. The ancient hermit built for himself a little hut of stones, and was, as often, content with the natural cave in the rock. I believe that his lonely residence was designated by the name of *cill*, while the term *ceall* was bestowed on the church. The two words are pronounced differently, with distinct accuracy, in the parts of the country where the Irish language is well spoken; and this would indicate that they

meant different objects. But in many places now, owing to the gradual decline of Irish, *ceall* and *cill*, and even *coill*, "a wood," are confused and pronounced commonly as "keel."

The name *Domhnach* is the softened pronunciation of *domhtach*, which is formed of *dom*, "a house," and *tach*, "of God," or "godly;" that is, "the house of God." *Tach* comes from *ta*, which seems to be the original name of God in the Celtic language. In the Irish annals we also meet the word, *cathach*, which means, likewise, "the house of God," from *ca*, "a house," and *tach*, "of God," or "godly." The late Professor O'Curry, introduces these two words in his fifteenth lecture on Irish manuscripts, and avows his inability to discover the roots or the real meaning of them. A very curious and ancient box, containing a Latin manuscript of the Gospels, which is believed to have come down from Saint Patrick, is called by the name of *Domhnach airgid*. *Domhnach airgid* means "the house of God of silver." This box, or case, is richly ornamented with that metal. Another box containing a copy of the Psalms supposed to be as old as Saint Columba, is called *cathach*. *Cathach* means, also, "the house of God." It was usual to give the name of church, or house of God, to an ancient case containing relics. In other countries the name of *apsis*, or *apse*, which means "the chancel of a

church," was given to a reliquary, or case in which relics were preserved. In treating of the old manuscripts, O'Curry declares that he is unable to discover the roots or meaning of the Irish words *domhnach* and *cathach.*

The name *domhnach* is traced up to the highest ages of Christianity in Ireland; and there are many places called by that name, doubtless, because they possessed some of these early churches.

The word *domhnach* has, also, given its modern Irish name to Sunday. In the Druidical times it was called *Dia-suil*, "the day of the sun." It is at present, and perhaps since the introduction of Christianity, called *Dia-domhnuig*, that is, "the day of the house of God."

Daimhliag is an abbreviated pronunciation of *dom-uile-ic*, that is, "the house of all the dead," from *dom*, "a house," *uile*, "all," and *ecc*, "dead." It got this name, because most of the churches were attached to the graveyards; for the dead were brought to repose near their walls. This name of *daimhliag* has been misinterpreted by even some of the best Irish antiquaries. They make it "the house of stone," from *dom*, "a house," and *leac*, "a stone." That, manifestly, is not as appropriate or as natural a formation of the word as "the house of all the dead," or of the grave-yard. And this is confirmed by even the name of grave-yard in the Irish language which

is *reileig*, from *reidh*, "a piece of ground," *uile*, "all," and *eag*, or *ecc*, "dead;" that is, "the place, or field, of all the dead." The grave itself is called *uaimhig* from *uaimh*, "a cave," and *ecc*, "dead."

The word *reiglios*, is an abbreviated pronunciation of *reileiglios*, and means "the house of the grave-yard;" from *reidh* "a piece of ground," *uile* "all," *ecc* "dead," and *lios* "a house."

The next name, *eclios*, means also, "the house of the dead;" from *ecc*, "dead," and *lios*, "a house." The churches and chapels, called by these names, had always graves or grave-yards attached to them. *Eclios*, however, is commonly derived from the Latin word *ecclesia*, which means "a church."

The name, *teampull*, as applied to a house, or place, of worship, has come down from even the Druidical times. For some special reasons, perhaps to avoid any reference to Paganism, this name was not generally bestowed by the early Christians of this country on their churches. The name was revived and used, for this purpose, only when the Druids and their worship had passed away. Teampull means "the round house, or structure;" from *tim* (pronounced *teem*), "time," and *cal*, "to surround;" that is, the endless circle of time, which was a favourite idea of the Druids, and of which the

teampull, or round pillared temple, was an emblem.

It was usual in Ireland to add the word *mor*, which signifies "large," to these names of churches. We are told that the same custom prevailed in the East. Thus we have *domhnach mor*, "the large house of God," *damhliag mor*, the "large house of all the dead," &c., &c. In many localities there were seven churches grouped within a short distance of one another. They represented the mystical number of the Apocalypse, and of, perhaps, the seven sacred Orders of Ireland. Clonmicnois had its seven churches, as, also, Glendalough, Roscrea, Devenish, Scattery Island, and many other places.

The custom of blessing wells, or natural water fonts, prevailed in the age of these early churches. In the Leabhar Breac, or Speckled Book, it is stated that St. Columbkille blessed three hundred of them, "and these were of constant flow."

In connexion with the ancient churches we have the names, *Deartheach*, *Cuilctheach*, *Cloictheach*, *Cloigtheach*, which have been complete puzzles to our antiquaries. *Cuilctheach*, *Cloictheach*, and *Cloigtheach* are names bestowed on the famous Round Tower of our country, an object to which I intend to devote a separate chapter. But what was the *Deartheach?* Some of

our antiquaries say it was an hospital, and others think it was an oratory, or a hermitage.

Deartheach, or *deortheach*, means "the house of tears;" from *deor*, "a tear," and *teach*, "a house." But, what is the meaning of the house of tears? An ancient Christian practice will throw some light upon it.

In the early ages of Christianity, public penance was, very generally, practised both in the Greek and Latin Churches. Upon those who had been guilty of grievous public crimes, it was enforced with great severity, and often extended over a period of twenty years, and, sometimes, even during life. In a modified form it was voluntarily adopted and practised by even good and virtuous people, as an atonement for their offences, and as a means of obtaining additional grace and favour from God. In the fourth century, certain canons, or rules, were framed for the regulation of the pious exercises connected with this practice, and these were called the Penitential Canons. From the clergy of the penitentiary church certain officers were selected and appointed to direct the exercises. The penitents were generally divided into four classes, or sections, in each of which they were to pass a certain time, according to the length and severity of the penitential course prescribed for them. The first act was to receive sack-cloth and ashes from the hands of the bishop at

the church door, as a symbol of sorrow and repentance. The second step was to fall into the ranks of those who, in the language of the Latin Church, were called the Flentes; that is, "the weeping or sorrowful." Here we have the meaning of *deartheach*, or "the house of tears;" for it was the lodging, or apartment, assigned to these penitents. There were, often, several of these attached to the penitentiary church for the accommodation of all classes, and, perhaps, of both sexes. They were sometimes constructed of wood and sometimes of stone; and were from twenty to thirty feet long, by twelve or fifteen feet broad. Like the churches, they had the door in the west gable, and a window at the east, with scarcely any aperture in the side walls, in accordance, perhaps, with the ideas of sorrow and gloom. They must, however, have been, in some instances, of much larger dimensions; for we read in the Irish Annals, that about the year 849, the *dearteach* of Trevet was struck by lightning, and that two hundred and sixty persons perished in it. The victims of this calamity, doubtless, were the pilgrims and penitents, who were reposing, or performing their devotions, in the "house of tears."

It is unnecessary here to state the various exercises to be performed by the penitents in each of the four grades, or classes. It will suffice to say that certain restraints were

removed, and certain spiritual privileges granted, according as they passed from one grade to the other, and that, in the end, they received absolution, and were admitted to Holy Communion. Then followed their very often, perhaps, reluctant departure from the penitential station and its "tears."

And the name of *dearteach*, or "the house of tears," was not simply a figurative expression. In speaking of the public penances of his own time, St. Ambrose, the great bishop of Milan, in Italy, who wrote about the year 380, says—"I have known many persons who, during the period of their penance, disfigured their faces by dint of weeping for their sins, whose cheeks were furrowed by the constant rush of tears, and whose fastings and austerities were such as to produce in them the very image of death." The penitential canons of Ireland were, according to ancient rule, very severe. For instance, the crime of murder was to be expiated by a penance of seven years on bread and water, and by being excluded from Holy Communion till the period of death. The penance for other crimes was proportionably heavy. Even it was enacted that a person who refused to receive guests under his roof, to give alms, or to exercise hospitality, should, for the time he spent in that course, do penance for an equal period on bread and water; and if he remained obstinate in his avarice, he

was to be separated from the body of the faithful.

It appears that these public penances were continued in Ireland down to a comparatively late period, to the twelfth, thirteenth, and perhaps, the fourteenth century. We learn from some Irish documents that *dearteachs* were erected in this country up to the twelfth century, and that payment for their erection was made in cows; that is, that the artificer, or builder, received so many cows for each structure, according to the durability and expense of the materials. In the same way was payment, also, made for the erection of churches.

Even to this day there are to be found in Ireland vestiges, or remains, of the ancient public penances. The pilgrimages which are performed at the sites of the old churches and monasteries are, manifestly, remnants of them; and it is most likely that the places which are frequented for this purpose were formerly regularly established penitential stations. Among these stands conspicuously the station of Clonmicnois, otherwise called the Seven Churches, on the Shannon. It got the name of *Clonmicnois*, from *Clon*, "a residence," *mic*, "sons," and *nois*, "noble;" because it was a famous school for the sons of the nobility in former ages. And it was called the Seven Churches, because the group of buildings consisted of seven churches,

and was, perhaps, composed of a church belonging to each of the seven Religious Orders of Ireland, or perhaps, because they were made to represent the mystical number, seven, of the Apocalypse, and of the Scriptures. But, perhaps, the most frequented of these penitential places now is Saints' Island, in Lough Dearg, on the confines of Donegal and Fermanagh. To this station pilgrims resort from all parts of the surrounding country, and spend there three, six, and sometimes eight days. In the olden times, princes and nobles from foreign lands came there, accompanied by large retinues of friends and followers, to perform their devotions. The station opens about the beginning of June, and lasts to the fifteenth of August. The exercises commence in the evening, and the first night is spent in perfect silence and wakefulness in the church, or chapel. The succeeding days are devoted to prayer and meditation; and the penitential course is concluded when they go to confession and receive Holy Communion. In all these exercises, particularly with respect to Confession and Communion, the penitents receive the kindest attention from the local Friars, and, often, from the secular clergy. Of course, among such numbers there are noticed various shades of devotional anxiety and attention; but all seem to be animated by a desire of performing the exercises well. It is mar-

vellous to see how some of the features of the old Public Penances are here preserved. There is no bishop to give them the sack-cloth and ashes; but as a substitute for them they cover their heads with a cloth, perhaps with a dark-coloured handkerchief; and they go through the exercises barefooted. Even the stern Penitentiary of old, with his whip, is, in a manner, represented there. In the chapel, on the first night of silence and wakefulness, is a person carrying in his hand an ozier twig, or branch, with which he touches slightly on the head, or cheek, any of those on whom he would perceive the indications of sleep. And his monitions are always received with the most perfect good humour.

This station is called in the language of the country, *Purgadorect Naor Phadriug*, which means literally, "the Purgatory of St. Patrick." In the Irish language *Purgadorect* means a severe penitential course, and, also, suffering, or purgatory; and it is supposed that it got its name from the fact of its having been appointed, or inaugurated, as a station for Public Penance, by the great Apostle of Ireland.

And the people, even under their own guidance, cling to these ancient pious customs, or practices, with wonderful tenacity. At Glendha-lough, in the county of Wicklow, a place which, also, had its seven churches, the mystical

seven of the Apocalypse and of high antiquity, there is a famous station for penitential pilgrims. Some time ago, in consequence of abuses which had occurred there in the way of rioting and drunkenness, a neighbouring bishop resolved to keep the people from the usual annual observance. The priests were directed to communicate his instructions to their flocks; but still great numbers went there as usual. Among these was a carman named Jemmy O'Rourke, who, when he next met the priest, was brought to an account for having violated the prohibition. Jemmy's answer was very characteristic, and probably conveyed the sentiments of all those who had followed the same course. "I have been," said he, "going to that place for the last thirty-five years; I don't go there to drink or to fight, but to say a few prayers, and do a little penance. It is only pickpockets and scoundrels that go there for a bad purpose, and, sure, they go everywhere. My father and grandfather went there, and, I believe, all my fathers up to the days of St. Patrick; and, bedad, Father John, with all due respect, whatever bishop or archbishop may say, I'll go there to the end."

Remains, in a modified form, of the old penances are still, however, conducted under ecclesiastical guidance. For instance, the abbot of Mount Melleray, in the county of Waterford,

receives at his monastery persons, whether priests or laymen, who may be disposed to spend some time there in spiritual retreat or retirement. His "house of tears," with its apartments for penitents, may not equal in rigour and austerity the *dearteach* of the olden times; but it, certainly, is not inferior to it in neatness, hospitality, and godly refinement.

In many of the *dearteachs* stone altars were placed, as in the churches, under the east window; and it is inferred from this fact that they were occasionally, perhaps, for the convenience of the penitents, used as oratories, or private chapels. It is much to be regretted that the religious fanaticism of a subsequent age fell with peculiar destruction on these ancient altars, as, otherwise, they would now, certainly, be very interesting objects of antiquarian and artistic study. The action, or religious service, performed on these altars, is, in the Irish language, called *afrionn*, or *afrionn-de*, a name that is traced up to the earliest period of Christianity in Ireland, and which is still familiar to the tongues of the native population.

What is the meaning of this word *afrionn?* All the dictionaries of the Celtic language say that it means the Mass; but they give us no further explanation of it. Some of the lexicographers, such as O'Brien, say that it is an original Celtic word meaning "a sacrifice." Of

this, however, they fail to give any proof. Others endeavour to derive it from the Latin root, *offero*, "to offer," and others, again, such as the author of the *Gaelic Dictionary of Scotland*, strive to trace it to the Arabic and Chaldaic languages. It is, certainly, a singular fact, that Ireland is the only country of the Western Church which has a peculiar name of its own for the Mass. In all the rest it is a variation of the Latin word *Missa*, such as *Mass*, *Messe*, *Misa*, *Missa*, *Masse*, &c. of the English, French, Spanish, Italian, German, &c. In the Irish it is *afrionn-de*, or *afrionn*, and it was so, too, in the ancient language of Britain, Scotland, and Wales.

The word, *afrionn*, is not derived from the Latin, Arabic, Chaldaic, or any other foreign language. It is a compound word, formed from pure Celtic roots. It means "the very true lamb," from *a*, "very," *fior*, "true," and *uan*, "lamb." It is popularly called *afrionn-de*, which means "the very true Lamb of God." Manifestly, this word was formed in the Celtic language by the early Irish Christians or their missionaries, from the following expressions of holy Scripture: "The next day John saw Jesus coming to him, and he saith: Behold the Lamb of God, behold Him who taketh away the sin of the world." John i. 29. "For Christ our pasch, is sacrificed." 1 Cor. v. 7. "But with the precious

blood of Christ, as of a lamb unspotted and undefiled." 1 Peter i. 19. "White in the blood of the Lamb." Rev. vii. 14. "The Lamb, which was slain from the beginning of the world." Rev. xiii. 8.

In the service of the Church reference is often made to the Lamb, especially in the Mass, where it says, "Behold the Lamb of God, behold Him who taketh away the sins of the world," and in the Preface for the blessing of the Paschal candle on Easter Saturday, where it says, "This is the Paschal solemnity in which that true Lamb is slain."

These expressions of Scripture and the words of the Church service are beautifully rendered, condensed, in this Irish word, *afrion*, or *a-fior-uan-de*, "the very true Lamb of God." It is not alone by words this idea is expressed, but also by signs and emblems. The figure of the lamb with the cross is often inscribed on the front of the altar, and woven in the vestments of the priest. There is no particular rule for this practice, but it appears that in Ireland it may be traced up to the most early Christian period. The popular language and tradition hand down to us a form of oath, or mode of swearing, that is intimately connected with this word *afrionn*. It was at one time, during the middle ages, customary to swear by the Mass, and by the Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist. The same

practice existed, to some extent, in Ireland ; and the form of the oath was, *Dar an afrionn cumhachdach*, that is, "By the powerful very true Lamb." This oath still lives in the language of the people ; but from a feeling of reverence, it is very seldom used. It does not belong to the province of the antiquary to discuss the propriety of these oaths on any occasions, or perhaps the still greater propriety of their abolition. The matter is referred to here merely because it throws an additional ray of light on the meaning of the word *afrionn*, for which, I trust, it will not be necessary, any more, to hunt in the Arabic and Chaldaic languages.

Here the question naturally suggests itself—Why has Ireland a name for the Mass different from that which prevails in all the other countries of the Western Church? It must have been that either the first Christian Missionaries to Ireland came from the East, or that Christianity was preached in the country before the word, Missa, or Mass, was generally adopted to designate this great action of the altar. It is a singular fact, that for the Mass, for the Churches, for the Sacraments, and for the offices of religion, there are in Ireland purely Celtic names, formed from pure Celtic roots, without any foreign admixture. Thus, among other nations, the general names for the Sacrament of the altar are Eucharist, and the Lord's Supper ; while

in Ireland it is *Corp Chriost*, that is, "the Body of Christ." This Celtic name seems to have been formed directly from the words of our Saviour, *Touto esti to soma mou*, "this is my body." When Christianity reached this country, it found there a copious, expressive, and settled language, which, by its fecundity in primitive roots and beautiful compounds, was capable of supplying words for all the points of practice and of belief, without the intervention of any foreign admixture.

In connexion with the sites of the ancient churches of Ireland, there is frequent mention of the names of *Baile*, *Cluain*, and *Cill*, such as *Baile-Tobair-Phadraig*, "the Bally of the well of Patrick;" *Cluain-mic-nois*, "the Cloyne of the sons of the nobility;" and *Cill-Mhuire*, "the Cill of Mary." *Baile* is a compound word, formed from *ball*, "a part," and *i* (pronounced *ee*), "a country;" that is, a definite, or circumscribed, part of a country. *Cluain* is a compound word, formed from *clui*, "a ditch, or ridge of earth," and *ain*, "a circle;" that is, a circumvallation round a church, a monastery, or a residence. An illustration of this is to be found in a description which is given of Clonagh, in the County of Kildare, as it existed at one time. "In it," it says, "was a piece of ground surrounded by a ditch, and in the centre of the circle were a stone cross, a church, and two yew-trees, from one of which

hung a bell." *Ceal* and *cill*, as we have already seen, mean "the house of Heaven, or the house of the flock, and the house, or cell, of stone." The one refers to the church, and the other, probably, to the cell, or hut, of the hermit. They are now commonly confused in the single name, *keel*, and often, even, confounded with *coill*, "a wood." In the popular language *ceal*, or *cill*, means a "grave-yard," as the dead were buried near the churches. No spot on earth was more ardently desired by the Irishman for a last resting-place than the side of the church where he and his forefathers had worshipped.

Among the structures, or places of this class, there is frequent mention of *cill-mor*, "the large *cill*," and *cilleen*, the "small, or lesser *cill*," or church. From the primitive church the name of *ceall* was, in many instances, at an early period, communicated to a portion of the surrounding country, to an entire parish, and, even, to a diocese; and it continues attached to them to this day. The same has occurred with respect to the name *cluain*.

The age of the ancient churches shone out like a bright star in Ireland. Among the Celtic nations the Erin of this period was, in the old tongue, called "*Oilean Naoimh agus Ollaimh*;" that is, "the Island of Saints and of Learned Men;" or, as it was expressed by the monastic writers in Latin, *Insula Sanctorum atque Doc-*

torum. The disturbing influences arising from intestine wars and foreign invasions, which convulsed other countries, were not at this time felt in Ireland. No Roman legion had touched her shores, and no horde of barbarians from the north had, as yet, established a footing on her soil. This peaceful period was devoted to the cultivation of sacred and secular knowledge, in such a way, as to attract the foreign student from beyond the seas, and to inspire the natives with zeal for the advancement of religion and of learning. It may appear something like romance or wild fiction to be told, in a material age like the present, that to ancient Christian Ireland flocked thousands of foreign students from various countries of Europe; that they received a free education in its colleges and monasteries, and were, moreover, supplied gratuitously with food, raiment, and books. Yet, these facts are testified to, not alone by the native annalists, but by Venerable Bede, and other foreign writers. Besides her immunity from foreign wars and invasions, at this time, Ireland also enjoyed another peculiar advantage. While other nations, such as England, France, Spain, and even Italy, were endeavouring to form new languages for themselves, out of the scattered fragments of confused native and foreign materials, she possessed an ancient, settled, and copious tongue, which had received cultivation

and polish from the old Druidical teacher, as well as from the more recent Christian scholar.

With these advantages, the fame of her schools shed a halo of glory on the Ireland of this period. Foreigners called her the school of the west. Without mentioning various other places that may be named, the colleges of Armagh, Clonard, Clonfert, Clonmicnois, and Bangor counted their pupils by hundreds, and even, in some instances, by thousands. On the south-western coast of the island, is a now comparatively insignificant place called Rosscarberry. In the age of the early churches it was called *Ros-ailerig*, that is, the "plain of the pilgrims," from the numbers of students, native and foreign, who flocked to its schools. *Ailerig*, or *oilerig*, is a compound word, formed from *aill*, "a journey," *air*, "on," and *i* (pronounced *ee*), "land." Lismore, another place in the south, was extolled, by even foreigners, for its generous hospitality, and for the number and excellence of its halls of learning. Ireland has also a right to claim Iona, an island on the western coast of Scotland, as the seat of one of her ancient schools; for its famous monastery and halls of learning were the creation of the zeal and genius of St. Columcille, a native of Erin. There, in the sixth century, was lighted the torch of faith which shed an illumining ray on the Islands and Highlands of ancient Alba, and attracted pilgrims of

learning and of piety from many of the countries of Europe. This place, which even still exhibits, in their ruins, many interesting monuments of its ancient greatness and sanctity, was called *Iona*, that is "the island of the monks," from *i*, "an island," and *mana*, "monks." It was, also, called, early, *I-colum-cille*, the "Island of Columcille," from the name of its great saint and founder. Ireland, Scotland, and even Norway, have sent the ashes of many of their monarchs to repose there, in its sacred soil.

The name of Columcille, or Columba, recalls a custom which prevailed among those whom we call the early saints of Ireland. It was that of assuming or receiving certain names when they had embraced the religious state. Columcille means the dove of the church, or of the churches, from *colum*, "a dove," and *cille*, "of the church." The name of the dove was in great favour with them, probably, from the words of the Gospel, "Be simple as doves." Thus, many bore the name of Colman, which means the dove-like man; from *colum*, "a dove," and *an*, "a man." *Moculmoge* was another form of it, from *mo*, "a man," *colum*, "a dove," and *oge*, "young." Other names were assumed, such as *Deglan*, "the man of the fear of God," from *De*, "of God," *eagla*, "fear," and *an*, "man;" *Fachtnan*, "the just man," from *fachthnacht*, "just," and *an*, "man;" *Uanan*, "the lamb-like man," from *uan*,

"a lamb," and *an*, "man;" *Cainneach*, "Canice," "the just person," from *cain*, "just," and *neach*, "any one," &c.

From many of the ancient schools and monasteries of Ireland, numbers of trained preachers and scholars went, every year, to foreign lands, some to announce the Gospel to those who were still pagans, and others to found churches, monasteries, colleges, and even universities, in the land of the stranger. In this work of mental culture all classes of the clergy, even the high prelates themselves, took an active part. The Annals of the Four Masters, in recording the death of a prelate, at this period, very often speak of him in the triple character of "Bishop, Abbot, and Writer;" "epscob. abb. agus scribhnoir;" and they frequently add, "a vessel of sanctity and a select doctor." This state of things continued till about the end of the eighth century, when the black ships of the northern pirates, called the Danes, commenced to crowd into the harbours, bays, and large rivers of the island. In the native Annals these unwelcome visitors are called by the name of *Almhurig*, from *all*, "wild, or foreign," *muir*, "the sea," and *eagh*, "a person of;" that is, "wild men of the sea;" *Gallav*, that is "foreigners," or, perhaps, "Gauls," as they had founded a settlement in Gaul, or France; *Lochlanig*, from *loch*, "a lake," for they lived in their ships

principally; *Northmanniv*, "men of the north;" and *Gentlidhlig*, "Gentiles, or Pagans." Then commence our Annals to record, in words of sorrow, the plunder of churches, the burning of monasteries and their colleges, the preys of women, and the massacre of bishops, priests, and other ecclesiastics. Wide-spread desolation swept over the ancient schools, and many of the churches were left in ruins. It was only after a fearful struggle of two centuries that the men of Ireland, under the command of "Brien the Brave," struck a final blow at these foreigners on the bloody field of Clontarf.

The staff of ecclesiastical officers connected with the ancient churches, especially the episcopal or large churches, was very considerable. In the Annals of the Four Masters we find notices, in connexion with Clonmicnois alone, of bishops, bishops and abbots, *cele-de* (Culdee), deans, archdeacons, economists, lectors, chief lectors, priests, chief priests, great priests, priors, doctors, scribes, seniors, porters, and bell-ringers. The modern reader can understand all these names and the offices attached to them, with the exception, perhaps, of the *cele-de* (pronounced *kay-le-dhay*), or Culdees, as they are called in English. The Irish word *cele-de*, from which are formed the Latin *Colideus* and the English *Culdee*, means "the servant, or the vassal of God." The *cclidhe-de* were, it appears, a strict religious

order, consisting of priests and associated lay brothers. Their priests went, often, on special missions of preaching to different places, and had a high reputation for wisdom, learning, and sanctity. The Annals of the Four Masters thus record the death of one of the order at the year 1200:—"Uaireirghe, son of Mulmora, a noble sage of the sages of Clonmicnoise, a man full of the love of God, and of every virtue, the head of the Culdees of Clonmicnoise, died on the tenth of March." Romance, allegory, and legend have not failed to throw their halo of wonder round the person and office of the ancient Culdee, as will appear by the following curious entry, at the year 806, supplied by the Four Masters from some old record or tradition:—"In this year the *cele-de* came over the sea with dry feet without a vessel; and a written roll was given him from heaven out of which he preached to the Irish; and it was carried up again when the sermon was finished. This ecclesiastic used to go every day southwards across the sea, after finishing his preaching." The words of this extract, in the original Irish, would seem to indicate that they were borrowed from a very ancient source by the compilers of the Annals. Among the Irish manuscripts preserved in the Library of Trinity College, Dublin, the late Professor O'Curry discovered a small tract, containing the rules, or disciplinary regulations, of these "servants of

God." It consists of nine pages quarto; and the authorship of it is ascribed to St. Maelruain, of Tallaght, in the county of Dublin, who died in the year 787. "It contains," says O'Curry, "a minute series of rules for the regulation of the lives of the *celidhe-de*, of their prayers, their preachings, their conversations, their confessions their communions, their absolutions, their fastings, their abstinences, their relaxations, their sleep, their celebrations of Mass, and so forth."

This little tract, which, by the merest accident, was discovered by O'Curry, is one of the scattered fragments of the noble pile of manuscripts which Ireland once possessed, and which were the cherished productions of her ancient schools. It has some surviving companions, a few at home, and others scattered through the different countries of Europe. But most of the once numerous family have perished. Those that remain, in the shape of biblical and liturgical manuscripts, are some of the oldest and finest in the world. "I have often," says the late Dr. Todd, of Trinity College, "felt the greatest wonder, not only at the number and almost incredible antiquity of the Irish biblical manuscripts that still remain, but at the amazing ignorance that exists about them, and the small amount of interest they appear to excite. Whoever examines the annals of Ireland, will find them one mass of records of burnings and

slaughters, battles, murders, and the destruction of monasteries. Books were not then spared. And when it is remembered that, at the period of the Reformation, church books were specially sought out for destruction, we cannot but wonder that so many of them now remain."

In treating of the ancient churches it would, perhaps, be ungracious to pass over in silence the name of a celebrated native architect of that period. This was the Goban Saor, whose name still lives in the traditions of the people, and who, in story and legend, is represented as a prodigy in the architectural and mechanical arts. Among other works ascribed to him, tradition states that he was the builder of the old church of Kilmacduagh, in the county of Galway, and of the round tower near it, which, like that of Pisa in Italy, exhibits the singular feature of leaning or declining many feet from the perpendicular.

Goban Saor means (*Goban*, pronounced *gub-bawn*), "the artificer or mechanist," a title bestowed on him by universal consent on account of his great preëminence as a working architect. There is scarcely a stone-mason or carpenter in Ireland of any standing, and with any pretensions to a knowledge of professional lore, who cannot tell a dozen stories respecting the wonderful powers of Goban Saor. It is stated that, when a very young man, and in want of employ-

ment, he came to a place where a large number of tradesmen were building a church for an old abbot. He applied to the overseer, or foreman, for employment on the work. The young man's statement of his accomplishments and of what he was able to do, appeared rather pompous to the surly old official. Still he consented to take him on trial for a few days. It was just about noon, the time of the day when the men went to dinner. The overseer was also retiring; nor did he remember to invite the stranger to partake of his hospitality. Goban asked him what might he himself be making (doing) while they were away. The foreman replied, in half irony, half indifference, that he may make a cat with two tails if he liked (*dean cat is dha earbaill, mas math leat e*), "Very well," said Goban. With the assistance of the working tools which lay scattered on the ground, he, at once, commenced to execute the apparently impossible task. It was in the hot season of summer, and the workmen were in no great hurry to return from their repast, and mid-day repose, or rest. Tradition does not say by what means Goban accomplished the feat, whether it was by secret springs or by a combination of wheels, artfully introduced into the body of the automaton; but when the men returned to their work, they beheld the strange sight of a cat with two tails jumping about on the grounds. As the old foreman could not resist

the evidence of his eyes in the matter, he ascribed the whole thing to magic. The abbot himself was called to behold the wonder. After admiring it for some time, he called the young artist to his presence. The words of this interview are not recorded; but Goban was invited by him into the monastery, where refreshments were immediately provided for the stranger, and a promise given him that while he was employed on these works every just consideration should be extended to him. Before the church and other edifices in connection with it were finished, Goban was universally acknowledged to be the most clever of his fellow-workmen, and pre-eminently the master of all in everything that required either creative genius or delicate handling. In reference to a person of great mechanical abilities, there is still in Ireland often used the expression, that "he would make a cat with two tails which would jump over a house, like the Goban Saor."

Another story says that Goban was, at one time, engaged to build a grand residence for a local chief, or petty king, in a remote part of the country. When the work was approaching completion, and fully displaying its beautiful proportions, this savage chief was so enchanted with it, that he conceived the horrid idea of putting the architect to death, to prevent any other man in the land from ever possessing a similar resi-

dence. When Goban was a young man, leaving home to seek his fortune in the world, his clever mother, while giving her consent and her blessing, among other admonitions, advised him, wherever he should go, to make for himself friends among the women. His genius and fine natural qualities, coupled with the advice thus imparted, made him a great favourite in that quarter. It was very useful to him now. A female of the family, who by some means had discovered the intentions of the chief, informed him of the danger, and advised him to escape from it with all the tact and expedition he could command. In a day or two the chief went to inspect the work, and inquired of the architect how soon he expected to have it finished. This inquiry was suggestive of serious thought, and no small apprehension. Goban, without exhibiting any emotion, said that it was now fast approaching completion, and that it only wanted a few finishing touches, for which it would be necessary for him to go to his own home to bring with him a certain instrument, which was specially designed for effecting such improvement. The chief would not listen to any proposition for his departure. He said that he would send his own son, a youth of about twenty years old, with two servants, on horses, to bring the instrument. Goban had to submit. His resources, however, did not fail him. When the youth, who probably knew nothing of

the intentions of the cruel father, was brought to Goban, to obtain from him the name of this engine, or tool, the architect told him, in the presence of the chief, that it was called "the crooked and the straight," *an cam is an direach;* that the members of his family were well acquainted with these things, and that his daughter-in-law, especially, knew where to find it.

Goban's residence was situated at a considerable distance, in the territories of another petty king. The youth and his attendants, on arriving at the place, delivered their message. They were received with kindness and hospitality. The name of the strange tool, however, excited some suspicion. In the architect's entire collection there was no such thing as the *cam is an direach,* the crooked and the straight, and the daughter-in-law, who was a sharp clever woman, at once suspected that there was some mystery in that strange name. She was not satisfied with the reasons they gave why Goban himself had not come for it, and why he had not visited his home, at all, for so long a time. After some consultation by the family, it was decided that the two attendants would be permitted to return to the chief for further explanations, but that his son should be retained as hostage, till inquiry should be made respecting the circumstances and the safety of Goban. The result was, that not only was the architect permitted to

return safe from the territory of his would-be murderer, but that he was also enabled to bring with him the cattle, corn, and even the ornaments of gold which he was to receive as payment for the execution of the work.

The stories in circulation about this celebrated mechanist would fill a volume. Of these some are the written productions of bardic chroniclers, others are handed down solely by oral tradition. In them, even, is preserved the memory of his father Traigh Tuirbi, and of his wonderful feats, also, as a wielder of the hatchet, and an architect. The legend may be silly, extravagant, and highly incredible in itself, but its presence is generally indicative of some remarkable qualities in the character or person whom it follows. It follows Goban Saor, and he was one of the long line of clever artificers who built the ancient churches of Ireland, and, also, erected those tall, graceful, and solid Round Towers which bear upon them the marks of great age, and which, in valley, island, and on hill-side, are now found standing, in single and mystic loneliness, near a ruin which was once a church, or near a church which is only the distant successor of the original sacred structure.

CHAPTER IV.

THE ROUND TOWERS OF IRELAND.

THE ORIGIN AND USE OF THE TOWERS HITHERTO UNKNOWN.—FORM, MASONRY, AND ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES OF THE ROUND TOWERS—PROBABLE NUMBER OF THE ROUND TOWERS IN IRELAND.—FOUND NEAR ANCIENT CHURCHES.—THEIR GREAT AGE—VARIOUS THEORIES RESPECTING THEM.—THE NAME OF THE ROUND TOWER IN IRISH, AND THE LIGHT IT THROWS ON THE SUBJECT.—IT MEANS A REED-HOUSE—THEY WERE ANCIENT BAPTISTERIES.—DESCRIPTION OF THE ANCIENT CHRISTIAN BAPTISTERIES OF THE EARLY CHRISTIANS IN OTHER COUNTRIES BY WRITERS ANCIENT AND MODERN.—MANY FEATURES OF THE ROUND TOWERS PROVE THAT THEY WERE OF THE SAME CLASS.—THE ROUND TOWER OF BRECHIN IN SCOTLAND.—THE ROUND TOWER OF KENEIGH IN THE COUNTY OF CORK.—IN THE EARLY AGES BAPTISM WAS PERFORMED BY IMMERSION.—EASTER AND PENTECOST THE PRINCIPAL PERIODS FOR SOLEMN BAPTISMS—THE LOWEST COMPARTMENT OF THE ROUND TOWER, THE PLACE FOR BAPTISM, HAS NO LIGHT, OR WINDOW.—THE MEANING OF THE FOUR WINDOWS FACING THE CARDINAL POINTS.—THE ANCIENT BAPTISTERIES CALLED HOUSES OF ILLUMINATION.—TRADITION COUPLES FIRE OR LIGHT WITH THE ROUND TOWERS.—WHITE LIME-STONE NOT USED IN THE WALLS OF THE TOWERS.—THE REED THE MODEL OF THE ROUND TOWER.—PECULIAR FEATURES OF THE REED.—THE ROUND TOWER GENERALLY SINGLE.—TWO IN A FEW PLACES.—STUMPS OF TOWERS.—MINIATURE TOWERS—ARCHITECTURE OF THE TOWERS RESEMBLES THAT OF THE OLD CHURCHES.—THE ROUND TOWER, OR REED-HOUSE AN EMBLEMATIC STRUCTURE.—A VERY ANCIENT MANUSCRIPT BAPTISMAL RITUAL OF IRELAND THROWS LIGHT ON THE REED-HOUSE.—THE ROUND TOWER A PROOF OF EARLY CHRISTIAN CIVILIZATION, AND OF AN EARLY CONNECTION WITH THE EAST.

Is it not a shame and a wonder that the true idea of the origin and use of the Round Towers of Ireland, should have been buried in the darkness of, perhaps, a thousand years? Yet it

is so. These objects, so striking and remarkable, have been made the subject of many Essays, and of, almost, innumerable discussions. Still, no published theory respecting them has been accepted, as true or as satisfactory, by public opinion. The latest distinguished writer on Irish history says, that "probably the question of their origin and of their use will for ever remain in obscurity." In the face of such discouragement and failure, it requires no slight energy to approach the subject now with a hope of success.

It will not be out of place here to describe briefly the general features, form, and characteristics of these ancient structures. They are round, or circular, stone edifices, varying in height from fifty, to one hundred and thirty, or forty feet, and in circumference from forty, to sixty, or more, feet at the base. They are tapering, or slightly lessening in size, from the foundation upwards; and they terminate at the top in a conical head, varying from ten to fifteen, or perhaps twenty, feet high. This cap or top sometimes exhibits a projection in a ring or cornice, at the point where it springs from the body of the tower, and it is supposed that it terminated in a stone cross. At the base, the tower, also, usually projects outwards, in the form of two or three steps, in so many courses of circular masonry. In many cases, especially where there is not a solid rock foundation, these

are only partially visible above the soil. The wall at the base, is never less than three feet thick, and is sometimes even five feet, when required by the height and massiveness of the superstructure. The body of the tower is divided into stories, or landings, varying from four to eight in number, according to the height of the tower; and the distance between each of the stories is about twelve feet. Each of the stories is lighted by an opening, or window, indifferently placed east, west, north, or south; but the upper story, under the conical head, is generally lighted by four windows facing the cardinal points. The lowest story, at, or under, the doorway, has no window or aperture whatever for the transmission of light. The windows in the stories are generally narrow and small, and only one in each; while, in a few instances, in the uppermost story, there are two or three openings or windows, in addition to those facing the cardinal points. The character of the door is very peculiar. In some instances it is placed in the wall, only five or six feet from the ground, and then varies in elevation till it reaches twenty-four, or perhaps, thirty feet, from the foundation of the building. Its average height, however, is, perhaps, about twelve or thirteen feet; and, in some instances, there is over it an aperture, or window, by its largeness, resembling a second door. The doorways are generally small, and hanging in

from the perpendicular. The heads of them are sometimes square, being formed by a stone lintel, sometimes semicircular, formed by an arch, or hollowed stone, and sometimes angular, being formed of two massive stones, hanging in from the perpendicular sides, and meeting at the apex. The tops of the windows present the same varied features. The masonry of the towers resembles that of the ancient churches, but is more solid and substantial. There is in them the same irregular laying of the stones in the style called Cyclopean, and also the grouting, or packing of mortar, in the centre of the walls. The doorways seldom exhibit any architectural decorations; but there is sometimes on the lintel, or over the arch, an engraved cross, or a figure of the crucifixion; and in some cases a cornice runs along the outer edges. The round tower of Brechin in Scotland, has on it some figures or sacred emblems externally, which shall be noticed hereafter. Immediately under the conical head of the Round Tower of Devenish Island, in the county of Fermanagh, is a richly-sculptured cornice, in which are introduced four human heads, one facing each of the cardinal points.

The round tower is invariably found standing near an old church, or the ruins of an old church, or in a place where an ancient church is known to have existed.

The elevated door was reached by a flight of

steps, or a ladder from the outside; and the stories were reached by a ladder erected inside from one to the other. In them the different landings were formed of wooden flooring, for the joists or supports of which there were either off-sets, or resting-places, made in the construction of the walls. In many of the towers the stories are marked externally by set-offs. They are indicated in the one at Ardmore by bands or belts. The ancient stone steps to the door, having, apparently, in the lapse of ages, undergone many repairs and restorations, are still found in connexion with the perfect round tower of Clondalkin, near Dublin. They wind round, and close to, the outer base, resting on a support of stone and mortar rubble-work, and they spring from a point on the south side which, by an easy ascent, leads to the elevated door on the east. The solidity of the materials and of the workmanship in the walls of the towers has been well tested and proved by the frosts, heats, storms, and rains of many hundred years. In most of them, however, the sharp conical head has been injured or destroyed, more, probably, by the effects of lightning than any other cause. It is only in very few specimens that this peculiar cap is perfect; but they all possessed it at one time. Possibly, not a few owe its disappearance or destruction, to Vandal ignorance, or vulgar utility, as in many cases it might have been

removed to make the top more open for transmitting the sound of a bell. Something of this kind has occurred to the round tower of Cloyne. About the year 1683 a bell was hung in it. The top was then open; but it is not ascertained whether that was the result of design or of accident. It was subsequently struck by lightning and the bell broken. For the protection of the new bell, its successor, ten feet of masonry were added to the top of the tower. This part was made to terminate in a castellated form, instead of the ancient conical head. The inner walls of the top of the tower of Ardmore have been scooped out, or cut away, to permit the swinging of a bell, though the conical head has been spared.

There were, probably, in Ireland, at one time, more than one hundred of these curious structures, of which seventy or eighty now remain in various stages of preservation and dilapidation. The Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge professed to have traced out the existence of one hundred and eighteen of them. Their list, which included fallen towers as well as those standing, was published in the year 1845, and is, perhaps, as accurate as it could be in circumstances of the kind. Possibly, it was somewhat in excess of the real number. In many of the towers the masonry and materials are of a very superior and durable quality. All, however, were of the same form, or model, that is, rotund,

tapering to the top, and terminating in a conical head.

It must be admitted that, in not a few instances, human hands have assisted the elements in obliterating all vestiges of many Round Towers. This was the case with respect to the Round Tower of Rosscarbery, of which not a trace now remains, and, also, with regard to the Round Tower which stood near the church of Saint Finbarr, in the city of Cork. In the year 1720, a violent storm threw down the Round Tower of Brigowne, near Mitchelstown, leaving standing of it only a fragment or stump about fifteen feet high from the base. In that state it continued till about fifty years ago, when this fragment was taken down, and the stones used in the erection of a new glebe-house or parsonage, in its immediate neighbourhood. The key-stone or lintel over the door, which had on it an inscribed cross, the workmen refused to take away; and that is either buried in the adjoining cemetery, or, perhaps, forms there now the foot-stone of an unknown grave.

Saint Finneachan, or Finnchu, was, at an early period, bishop and abbot of Brigowne. His staff or crozier was kept there for ages as a venerable relic, and of himself there is in the ancient book of Lismore a curious biography, replete, according to the taste of the age in which it was written, with legends, wonders, and

supernatural incidents. *Finncu* means the "fair hero or warrior," a name which, probably, he obtained because, as this record of his life states, he had often, even on the battle-field, personally assisted his friends, in the cause of right against might. The site of his monastery was called Bruighe-amhane, which means the field or farm of the river. Though the Round Tower and monastery have disappeared, the ruins of the old church are still standing there, and the memory of Finneachan himself lives distinct and undying in the local traditions of the people.

The age of the towers is truly great. In even the twelfth century, at the period of the English invasion, legend and story had gathered round them, on account of their great antiquity. In recording the physical wonders of Ireland, an English priest, Sylvester Gerald Barry (Giraldus Cambrensis), who had come with King John to this country, says that the fishermen of Lough Neagh, at certain times, saw the submerged round towers of past ages shining at the bottom of that lake. Or, as the poet Moore has rendered it:—

> On Lough Neagh's bank as the fisherman strays,
> When the clear cold eve's declining,
> He sees the round towers of other days
> In the wave beneath him shining.

Now, what was the use or origin of these

singular structures? By many they have been regarded as works erected under the reign of Druidism, and, in some way connected with the rites and ceremonies of that mysterious system. Some, with Vallancy, Dr. Lanigan, O'Brien, Dalton, Beaufort, and Moore, believed that they were houses, or temples, for the Pagan fire-worship, or for the performance of some ceremonies connected with the old Druidical religion. Others, with Dr. O'Connor, thought that they were used by the Druids as observatories for astronomical purposes. Others have said that they were high places used for proclaiming, by sound or light, or both, the Druidical festivals; and others, with Windele and Father Horgan, maintained that they were, in Pagan times, places of sepulture, or mausoleums for distinguished personages. All these theories are founded on conjecture, or on some facts or circumstances from which, undoubtedly, no convincing proof can be deduced.

There is another large host of writers and antiquaries who claim for the Round Towers a Christian origin, and say that they were erected for some purpose in connexion with the rites and practices of the Christian religion. On the particular purpose or object, however, for which they were erected, these writers are not agreed. Some say they were built by the Danes; but for what use

they know not. Others say that they were used by the early anchorites as penitential stations. Others assert that they were used as beacons, or bell-towers, in connexion with ancient churches. Lastly, Dr. Petrie, whose essay on the subject obtained a prize and gold medal from the Royal Irish Academy, maintained that they were intended to serve as belfries and also as keeps, or places of strength, in which the sacred utensils, books, relics, and other valuables of the adjoining church were preserved, and into which the ecclesiastics to whom they belonged could retire for security, in cases of sudden predatory attacks.

It would be an almost endless task to examine the grounds for these various theories, with a view to their refutation. It is only the true theory that can accomplish the work, and, if that can be discovered, it will demolish all these at one stroke. But with respect to Dr. Petrie's theory, one would imagine that a slight and narrow tower, one hundred, or one hundred and thirty, feet high, would be a poor place to fly to with one's treasures, when a few stones taken out of the foundation with a crow-bar would soon bring the whole structure crashing to the ground. That elevation, too, would not be the best suited for the ringing of a bell, or the transmission of its sound, especially when we know how small were the bells of early times,

compared with those in use at present. Possibly, to the circumstance of their never having possessed any treasure, is mainly due the preservation of so many of the Round Towers to this day.

Perhaps, according to our motto, *Antiquam exquirite matrem*,—"Search out the ancient mother"—the name of the Round Tower in the Irish language may throw some light on its use and origin. In the Irish Annals and old Chronicles we find the names, *Cloictheach*, and *Cloigtheach* applied to the Round Towers and to other structures. *Cloictheach* means "the house of stone," and *cloigtheach*, "the house of the bell," or bellfry. But the universal popular name of the Round Tower in Munster, Connaught, and other Irish-speaking parts of Ireland is *cuilceach*, or *culctheach*. This name is formed from *cuilc*, "a reed," and *theach*, "a house," that is, the reed-house, or reed-shaped structure. Thus, the people have always said, with constant unerring accuracy, when speaking of these structures, *cuilceach Cluina*, the Round Tower of Cloyne; *cuilceach Colmain*, the Round Tower of Colman, (the patron saint); *cuilceach Deaglain*, the Round Tower of Deaglan (of Ardmore), and so on. Some have said that *cuilceach* is a mere corruption of *cloigtheach*, "the bell-house." It is no such thing. It is the real, true name of the Round Tower in Irish, and is pronounced by the

people with unmistakable accuracy. There is growing in the bogs and rivers of Ireland a large kind of *cuilc*, or reed, with a conical head, which, in form and shape, resembles the lines of the Round Tower, and which, I am sure, was originally taken as the model for it. Any one looking at the perfect Round Tower of Ratoo in Kerry, and at the reeds growing in the water near it, must be, at once, struck by the great resemblance in shape which they bear to one another.

But what meaning, or mystery, is there in the reed, which it could communicate to the reed-house, or the round tower? The reed is an emblem of Saint John the Baptist, and, naturally, an emblem, or indication, of the water by which it is produced. Our Saviour in the Gospel compares Saint John to a reed shaken by the wind. "What went you out into the desert to see? A reed shaken by the wind?" Or, as it is in the Irish, "*Cuilc luasgah leis an ngaoith?*" Luke vii. 24. This points to the Round Towers as being of that class of structures called Baptisteries, which, in the early ages of Christianity, were attached to the Episcopal Churches, and in which adults of both sexes, as well as young persons, were baptised by immersion, and received, immediately after, the sacrament of confirmation from the hands of the bishop. There are various facts and circumstances, to be stated hereafter, which I think will place this

matter beyond all doubt. As a preparation for the proof, however, it will be useful to reproduce here what the learned French writer, Bergier, says of these ancient Baptisteries in his Encyclopædia of Theology, at Article Baptistère.

"The early Christians, as we are told by Saint Justin, Martyr, and by Tertullian, had no other baptisteries than the streams, the rivers, lakes, or the sea, near which they happened to be, or to reside, and as, at times, persecution did not permit them to baptize by day, they went there for the purpose by night, and they sometimes baptized in private houses. But when the Christian religion was embraced and protected by the emperors, besides the churches, particular structures were erected specially for administering baptism in them, and these were called baptisteries. Some authors have believed that these baptisteries were placed within the entrance or body of the church, as are our baptismal fonts at present. This is a mistake. The baptisteries were edifices placed altogether outside the churches, and standing at some distance from their external walls. The words of St. Paulinus, of St. Cyril of Jerusalem, and of St. Augustin, leave no room for doubt on this subject. These baptisteries continued to be separated from the churches to the end of the sixth century, at which time baptismal fonts commenced to be placed in the inner entrance

to the church, such as that in which Clovis received baptism from the hand of St. Remis. This usage, afterwards, became general, except with respect to some churches which continued to retain the ancient practice, such as the church of Florence, and the Episcopal churches of Tuscany, the Metropolitan Church of Ravenna, and the Church of St. John of Latteran, at Rome.

"These edifices were of very large dimensions, considering that early period; and baptism was administered in them by immersion, or by dipping the whole body in the water; and, except in cases of necessity, it was only at the two most solemn festivals of the year, that is, at Easter and at Pentecost, that such baptism was administered. The immense number of persons who presented themselves for baptism on these occasions, and the necessity of baptizing females separately from the males, rendered it necessary to have these places large. In them even altars and other matters were required to administer the sacraments of Confirmation and of the Eucharist to the neophytes immediately after their baptism. These baptisteries had different names, such as Piscina, and also Houses of Illumination, &c., &c., all referring to the graces which were received through the sacraments there administered."

"We find very little in the writings of the

ancients relative to the form and ornaments of these baptisteries. The following is what Fleury has collected on the subject from the writings of St. Athanatius, of Gregory of Tours, and of others :—'The baptistery was generally a round building, in which it was necessary to descend, or go down, a few steps to reach the water-font, or bath. The baptistery was ornamented with pictures or engravings suitable to the sacrament, and provided with vessels of gold and silver to contain the holy oils, and also to pour out the water. These had often on them the figure of a lamb, or of a hind, to represent the lamb in whose blood we are purified, and the desire of the souls who sought God, like the hind that panteth for the waters. There was on them the figure or image of St. John the Baptist, and also a suspended dove of gold or silver, to represent the history of the baptism of Jesus Christ, and the virtue of the Holy Ghost descending on the baptismal water.' So far the words of Fleury in his work 'On the Manners of the Early Christians (*Mœurs des anciens Chretiens*).'" Bergier then continues :—"At first the baptisteries were only in the episcopal cities or towns ; and from this it follows that, even at the present day, the Ambrosian rite does not permit the blessing of the fonts, on the eves of Easter and Pentecost, to be performed anywhere but in the metropolitan church, from which the parochial churches are to take

the water thus blessed, to mix it with the water used in them for baptism. In the church of Meaux it is the custom for the priests of the country to come in, and assist in baptizing the children, from Holy Saturday to the Saturday following, in the fonts of the cathedral church."

One or two extracts from an English London Cyclopædia on this subject of the ancient baptisteries, may be of some service. It says:—"These baptisteries generally stand near the churches to which they belong: the form is, for the most part, hexagonal, although many are circular. The baptistery of Florence, which is octangular, stands opposite to the principal entrance of the cathedral, and in the centre of it stood a very fine octagonal basin. The baptistery of Pisa is circular. The building is raised on three steps, and surmounted with a dome in the shape of a pear, and on it is placed a statue of St. John. The city of Ravenna, and the episcopal cities of Tuscany, have also their baptisteries. The baptismal font, or basin, was always placed in the building. At the close of the sixth century, the baptismal fonts belonging to the baptisteries began to be placed in the churches."—*Penny Cyclopædia.*

Are there any features in the Irish Round Towers to correspond with the characteristics of the ancient baptisteries as described in these extracts? There are many; and every circum-

stance connected with them can be easily explained by supposing that they are buildings of this class. In the first place, they are found near the old Episcopal Churches, where the bishop was present to administer the sacrament of confirmation, which, in the early ages of Christianity, was always received immediately after baptism. This is the practice in the Eastern, or Greek, Church to the present day. In the second place, the Round Towers, in many instances, exhibit the figures and emblems peculiar to the ancient baptisteries.

Firstly, they are found near the Episcopal churches of the early ages. Among these are to be included the churches of monasteries governed by mitred abbots, who, in the early periods of Christianity in Ireland, performed Episcopal functions for the people in their immediate neighbourhood. In many instances a small diocese was attached to a monastery thus circumstanced. The Irish Annals, especially those of the Four Masters, make frequent mention of the mitred abbot, or as they call him, "bishop and abbot," in recording his death and his virtues, or some other important circumstance connected with him. By the side of his church stood the ancient Round Tower, or the reed-house; and there, in many instances, it stands to-day, when the church and the monastery have totally disappeared. Those who received the waters of

regeneration in the lower compartment of that baptistery, were immediately afterwards confirmed by the bishop-abbot, and they were also admitted to holy communion. This sufficiently accounts for the fact, hitherto unexplained, of the Round Tower being found near certain churches, while near others no trace of it has ever been seen.

Secondly, the Irish Round Tower has, in form, site, and emblem, the peculiarities of the ancient baptisteries. These were round, high, and large, and so is the Round Tower. They were generally placed opposite to the principal entrance to the church, and so was the Round Tower. As we have already seen, the door in our ancient churches was always placed in the western gable; and in that direction, at a little distance away, stands the *cuilceach*, or reed-house, with its elevated door generally facing the door of the church. In some instances it is found a little to the right or to the left of the western gable of the present church standing near it; but, perhaps, that present church is only a successor of the original sacred structure which stood more directly opposite to its reed-house. The door of the ancient church was always in the western gable, and the Round Tower was invariably in that direction. Where the door of the Round Tower deviates, to the right or to the left, from due east, it is to be inferred that the west end of

its early church was a little to the right or to the left of it; for the door of the tower always looked towards the door of the church.

The emblems will fully establish our theory. In the description of the ancient Baptisteries it is stated that they generally had an emblem, a figure, or image, of Saint John the Baptist. The Irish Round Tower is, in itself, an emblem of him. In the Gospel, he is compared to the "reed shaken by the wind," from the circumstance, perhaps, of his having appeared among the reeds, when baptizing the people in the waters of the Jordan. The Round Tower is, in the language of the country, called the reed-house, and, in form and shape, resembles the large reed that grows in the lakes and rivers of Ireland. Here, then, in every case is an emblem of the Saint, as also of the water.

But this is not all. We find in the description of the ancient baptisteries that they had on them often an image of Saint John the Baptist, and also of a lamb. These identical figures are found on one of the Round Towers. In Scotland, there are two Round Towers in exact shape and form like those of Ireland. One stands near the old Episcopal Church of Brechin, the other near the old Episcopal Church of Abernethy. These were manifestly erected by the Irish ecclesiastics who followed their countrymen, Fearghus Mor and his brothers, into Scotland, when Fearghus was

elected and crowned king of that country about the year 500. It was he and his followers who, for this occasion, carried the famous *Lia-fail*, or "Stone of Destiny," more properly, the "Stone of the King," with them, from Ireland, to serve at his coronation. On the Round Tower of Brechin is the figure of Saint John the Baptist, holding a lamb in his arms, and a cup in his hand. Ledwich, in his work on Irish Antiquities, gives a good lithograph illustration of the doorway of this tower with these figures on the wall. The meaning of these figures is to convey a representation of the baptism of Jesus Christ by St. John in the Jordan, as it is thus recorded in the Gospel:—"These things were done in Bethania beyond the Jordan, where John was baptizing. The next day John saw Jesus coming to him, and he saith: Behold the Lamb of God, behold Him who taketh away the sin of the world."—*John* i. 28, 29.

St. Luke adds, that when Jesus was baptized by John, the Holy Ghost descended on him as he was coming out of the water. The figures on Brechin Round Tower, being an illustration, or representation, of the baptism of Jesus Christ, indicate that this structure was a place for baptism, too. But what means the cup in the hand of St. John? It is the vessel with which the water was poured on the head, or body, of the person to be baptized; a circumstance which

tells us that in these reed-houses, or baptisteries, baptism was sometimes performed by infusion, that is, by pouring the water on the body, as well as by immersion, that is, by dipping the whole body in the water. It depended, perhaps, much on the health, or convenience, of the person, as to what way he was to receive baptism, whether by immersion or infusion.

These figures place the object for which the Round Towers were erected beyond all doubt. Here Ledwich had in his hands the silken clue to the origin and use of that tower at Brechin, if he had been sufficiently acquainted with the ecclesiastical history of the early ages of Christianity. But, in his ardour for polemical warfare, Ledwich was always looking out for horrors and monsters in that direction.

Another distinctive feature, peculiar to the ancient baptisteries, is found in one of the Round Towers of Ireland. In the description of the old baptismal structures, both in the Eastern and Western Churches, it is stated that some of them were of an hexagonal form, and others octangular, and that the bason, or font, in them was often octangular, too. Six and eight were mystic numbers. The one was emblematical of the manifold gifts of the Holy Ghost; the other of the eight Beatitudes. These emblematical numbers are still found on many of the fonts of ancient churches in various countries. And, as if

in a special manner, to indicate the class of buildings to which it belongs, a lonely Round Tower, in the county of Cork, has on its external surface, in its six sides and six angles, the old mystic number of the ancient baptisteries. The first story of the Round Tower of Keneigh, near Bandon, is of the hexagonal form, while the rest of the structure from that to the summit is round. The first story, or lower compartment, was that which contained within it the bason or baptismal font; and here it has on it the old emblem of the manifold gifts of the Holy Ghost, in allusion to the descent of the Holy Ghost on Jesus, as he came out of the water. Keneigh, at an early age, had its monastery, and, as it is stated also, its "bishop and abbot," though now almost every vestige of the monastery has disappeared, leaving the round tower there in real mystic loneliness. The name Keneigh, or Kinneigh, would seem to be formed from *cinn*, "heads," and *eigh*, "horses;" as the high rocky eminences around it seem to resemble the heads of horses. The history of Keneigh, of its monastery, abbots, and Round Tower, has almost passed into the dark night of oblivion. Its first abbot and founder is said to have been Mocoemoge, or Mocolmoge, by whom also, in all probability, was erected the reed-house or Round Tower, built up in the mystic hexagonal form, to the height of sixteen feet from the foundation, the

tower itself being seventy-five feet high, and sixty-five feet in circumference at the base. It was much higher at one time, as the conical head and a part of the uppermost shaft are wanting, having, probably, been destroyed by the lightning and rains of ages. In the Annals of the Four Masters, there is one short notice of this place at the year 850, where it is said that "Forbhasach, son of Maeluidhir, abbot of the Large Church of Cinnech, died." Over the rest of its subsequent history reigns an unbroken silence. Many religious traditions and usages, however, prevail around the place, owing, doubtless, to its ancient character.

The hexagonal form of this *Keneigh* Tower, or "reed-house," is most important in determining the class of buildings to which it belongs. The Cyclopædia, already quoted, says that the ancient baptisteries of other countries were for the most part hexagonal and round. Here we have these characteristics; and if the hexagonal form is not found in any of the other towers, it was owing, perhaps, to the difficulty of building up such high and narrow structures in that shape. Even the one of Keneigh is not carried up higher than the first story in that form. Roundness was equally peculiar to the ancient baptisteries, and, probably, that feature was universally borrowed from the reed, the acknowledged emblem of St. John the Baptist.

Keneigh Tower has, also, another feature worth remarking. It is the original floor, at the door, over the lowest compartment, which contained the baptismal font. In most other towers this is wanting, as, very likely, it consisted of timber or boards resting on joists and covering the whole space, having, however, a hole or opening in it to allow an entrance to the compartment below. In the Keneigh tower this floor consists of large flag-stones inserted in the side-walls, and extending from them so far as to cover the whole space over the lowest compartment, leaving, however, a hole, or opening, in the centre of the floor, about three feet in diameter. That was the entrance to the underneath apartment, the place for baptism. These flag-stones extending from the side-walls are so nicely cut and fitted as to form a level and even floor. For ages, even to the lowest compartment, the tower was the habitation of rock pigeons; but as lately a bell was placed in it, these birds have taken their departure.

This original floor, and the opening in it, supply an additional proof of the accuracy of the present theory. It shows that the under compartment was one of importance, and that there should be easy access to it, while it was to be wholly and absolutely secluded and private. Not an accent could be heard outside from that apartment, nor a ray of light seen.

Keneigh is now lonely and desolate; but one

can, in imagination, carry himself back to a scene which presented itself there when the symbolical reed-house was used for its original purpose. He can imagine the time to be Easter, one of the great festivals of the year at which the solemn public baptisms were performed in the early ages of Christianity. The foundation of the old church in the grave-yard, still indicated by a broken and rugged elevation of the ground, shows that the reed-house, or Round Tower, stood, as usual, at a short distance from its western gable, in which was the entrance or doorway. A fragment of this gable was standing about thirty years ago, when it was pulled down, and the stones used in the construction of a new glebe-house. The door of the tower is fourteen feet from the ground, and faced the door of the church. In some towers the door is as low as five feet from the foundation, while in very few it rises above twenty feet, making the average height, perhaps, about eleven or twelve feet.

Here at Keneigh are great multitudes of people assembled for this solemn occasion. The priests, too, are there in large numbers. Some of them have come there in company with their people from distant parts of the country: others belonged to the monastery of the bishop-abbot. An easy flight of stone, or wooden, steps, or stairs, leads from the ground to the door of the reed-house, and up this passage are seen persons ascending,

and then, from the landing at the doorway, descending into the lower compartment of the building through that opening found there to this day. They are now inside that hexagon-shaped compartment, and, in a short time, they are seen descending to the outer ground again, and proceeding to the church where the mitred abbot is, in his episcopal robes, ready to administer to them the sacrament of Confirmation. Who are these that are going up into the reed-house, and coming back in that manner again ? They are those who, up to this time, have been designated by the name of Catechumens, that is, persons placed under a course of instruction preparatory to baptism. Hitherto they were permitted only to listen to sermons and holy reading, but never to be present at the performance of the mysteries of the altar. In that compartment of the tower which they have entered there are lights burning, and there stands, also, the large font of water which has received the solemn blessing prescribed by the Church. In that font they have received the trine immersion, and been baptised in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Some, perhaps, in consequence of delicate health, have received the sacrament by infusion or aspersion, that is, by pouring or sprinkling the water on their heads or bodies. They are now in the church, receiving confirmation from the hands of the bishop, and, after that, they are to be imme-

diately admitted to Holy Communion. Henceforward they are permitted to be present at the holy mysteries of the altar, and to enjoy all the privileges of a Christian.

The enthusiasm and religious joy that swayed the neophytes and their friends, on these occasions, could scarcely be imagined at present. There were often among those who received the regenerating waters of baptism, on such occasions, the reclaimed sanguinary chief, the young men from foreign lands who had come in quest of learning to Erin, and, even, the converted Druid, who, till very lately, had clung to his pillar-temple and stone altar, in the distant recesses of the mountains.

While these proceedings were going on at Keneigh, the bishop of Rosscarberry was using, for the same purpose, the reed-house which stood near the church of his monastery; the Bishop of Cork, the reed-house which stood near his Cathedral; the Bishop of Cloyne, the reed-house which stands there still; and so on, through the length and breadth of Ireland.

On these occasions, the neophytes, or newly baptized persons, received, at the religious ceremony, a white garment, or veil, which they wore for several days after. From this circumstance, Low Sunday, or the next after Easter, is, in the language of the church, called the "Sunday in White." Special reference was made to them in

the public liturgy of that day, and a fervent prayer offered up to God in their behalf. From the same appearance of the neophytes baptized at Pentecost, Pentecost Sunday is popularly called White, or Whit Sunday. These two great solemn festivals occurred within that period of the ecclesiastical year which, in the language of the church, is called the Paschal time. Thus, in Irish, Easter Sunday is called *Domhnach Caisce*, the Sunday of the Pasch, and Pentecost Sunday, *Domhnach cinnchishe*, that is, the Sunday of the head, or end of the Pasch. In some places solemn baptisms were also performed on the festivals of Christmas, of the Epiphany, and of St. John the Baptist.

It has been remarked by Dr. Petrie, and other writers on the subject of the Round Towers, that the lowest compartment has, in no case, a window or aperture for the transmission of light, while each of the other stories has always one or more windows. For this peculiar feature they are utterly unable to account. They have also observed that, in this lowest compartment, have been, often, found, mixed with the materials of the floor, ashes, the remains of charcoal, and other indications of fire, together with broken pieces of pottery. The cause of these appearances, too, they have failed to explain.

But, in the true theory, these details and appearances will fit with admirable exactness.

There is no window in the lowest compartment; for here candles were lighted at the ceremony of baptism; and it was proper that the persons engaged there, and who had often to alter their dresses for the occasion, could not, by any possibility, be seen from the outside. As, in the ancient baptisteries of foreign lands, there were places partitioned off there for undressing and redressing. On the days appointed for women, these were accompanied to the place by their female friends. This arrangement accounts for the total exclusion of light from without, while the interior was sufficiently illumined by the candles, or lamps, used at the sacred ceremony. As for the ashes, charcoal, and other indications of fire, together with the broken pieces of pottery, these may be naturally expected in a place to which fire must have been carried in some vessels, most likely of burned clay, to light the candles, and, as it was probably required at times, to air or heat the apartment, and temper the water used at baptism. The often severe weather at Easter, would suggest the necessity for a provision of this kind. Vessels of that sort might have been often also used for holding or pouring out the water on occasions of baptism.

But what of the four windows, at the uppermost story of the tower, facing the cardinal points? Can they be accounted for in any rational manner, in reference to these buildings,

as baptisteries, in connection with the ancient churches? They can. Even in the site and construction of the churches themselves, the cardinal points were scrupulously observed. Their walls ran east and west, north and south; the altar window being always in the east gable, and the door in the west. What, then, could be more natural than that, in an important edifice of a religious character, in connection with them, the cardinal points, too, would be indicated by some features of the building? But it appears that these four windows had, in themselves, a peculiar symbolical meaning. Four is a mystic number of the sacred Scriptures. It is frequently used in the Old Testament, and in the New. In the Gospel it is said:—"And he shall send his angels with a trumpet and a great voice: and they shall gather together his elect, from the four winds." Matt. xxiv. 31. St. Augustin, commenting on the mystic meaning of this passage, says, "For the parts of the world are four, the east, the west, the north, and the south. These four parts are frequently mentioned in Scripture. From these four winds, as the Lord says in the Gospel, from the four winds he is to collect his elect: therefore from all these four winds is the church called. How is it called? It is from all parts called in the Trinity. It is not called but by baptism, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." (Expos.

Super Psalmum 86). This was the mystic meaning of the four windows of the reed-house, facing, as we now express it, the four cardinal points of the compass, or the four winds. Persons were here called to baptism and to the church, from the east, west, north, and south.

As a striking and singular illustration of the subject, there is a reference to this Scriptural figure in the Church's prayer of the blessing of the baptismal font for Easter and other seasons of the year, where it says, " Here the priest divides the water with his hands, and throws some of it outside the margin of the font, towards the four quarters of the globe." *Hic manu aquam dividat, et deinde de ea effundat extra marginem fontis versus quatuor orbis partes.* The four windows were, manifestly, an emblem of this figure. That the cardinal points had an allegorical meaning in reference to baptism is certain. In addition to what has been already stated on the subject, it may be observed, that an ancient manuscript Ritual of the Cathedral Church of Saltzburgh, in Germany, directed that the head of the person who is being baptized should be dipped in the water, first towards the east, then towards the south, and then towards the north, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. St. Virgilius, a native of Ireland, was, at an early period, bishop of this church. Perhaps, it may not be unlikely that the same

rule or rubric was observed in Ireland, the native country of Virgilius, where the cardinal points were conspicuously indicated in the very structures in which baptism was performed. However this may be, it is manifest that the mystical meaning, expressed in it, was also conveyed by the four windows respectively facing the east, south, north, and west. The coincidence between this and the construction of the large vat, or "molten sea," for containing water in the temple of Solomon, is very striking and suggestive. This vat, which contained more than twelve thousand gallons of water, was placed upon supports which consisted of the brazen figures of twelve oxen. Three of these faced each of the four winds, or of the cardinal points. "It stood," says 3rd of *Kings*, verse 25, "upon twelve oxen, of which three looked towards the north, and three towards the west, and three towards the south, and three towards the east." This molten sea, or large water-vessel, in the temple of Solomon, was, probably, regarded as a symbol of baptism and of the baptismal font. At all events, its peculiar features with respect to the cardinal points exhibit a close and singular analogy to that ceremony of the blessing of the baptismal water which regards the four quarters of the globe, and, also, to the four windows of the Irish baptistery, or reed-house.

And if, as it is supposed, lights were placed at

night in that part of the reed-house, during the great festivals, the additional feature would give to the figure a deeper and more expressive significance. The ancient baptisteries of other lands, as the extracts from the French writers have stated, were called houses of illumination, or of light. Hence in the early ages of Christianity, baptized persons were called, in the Latin language, *Illuminati*, that is "the Illuminated, or Enlightened." It is not known for what special reason these edifices were called by that name; whether it was because the persons baptized in them had gone through a long course of instruction before they received the sacrament, or because through it the graces and enlightenment of the Holy Ghost descended on them, or because St. John the Baptist, the acknowledged patron of the baptisteries, is, in the Gospel, called a burning and shining light, or, as it is in the Latin version of the Church, *Lucerna ardens et lucens.* *John* v. 35. From one or other of these causes, or, perhaps, from all combined, the baptismal structure was called a house of light, and the persons baptized in it, the illuminated. The burning candle, which was always placed in the hand of the newly baptized person, had, of course, a reference to the same mystic meaning. Saint Justin, a native of Sichim, in Palestine, who was born in the beginning of the second century, and who, for priority of time, is regarded as the

first of the Fathers of the Church, says that "Baptism is called illumination."

It is a curious fact, that in the traditions of the people of Ireland there has been always found the idea of fire or light in connexion with the Round Towers. The Round Tower of Kilkenny was called "the lamp of Ireland," in Irish, *lampa na Eireann.* This title it obtained, perhaps, because it had been erected at a very early period, or, perhaps, on account of its great height, or because it was originally attached to a church dedicated to St. John the Baptist. Dr. Petrie says that his attention was called by a literary friend to the existence of a tower mentioned by Mabillon, in his *Iter Germanicum*, in connexion with the church of the monastery of St. Columbanus, at Luxiuil, in Burgundy. Mabillon says that it was called a *Lucerna*, that is, a "light," or "lantern." *Cernitur prope majorem ecclesiæ portam pharus quam Lucernam vocant.* "There is seen near the great door of the church, a tower which they call a lamp or light." St. Columbanus was an Irishman of great learning, zeal, and piety, who, in the sixth century, with twelve clerical associates, departed from one of the schools of Erin, and went across the seas, to carry the light of the faith to foreign nations. After much travel he at length settled down at Luxiuil, in France, where he erected a splendid monastery and church, and soon

attracted great numbers of students to his college. This tower, erected near the principal gate of the church, and called a Lucerna, or lamp, was, in all probability, a reed-house, or baptistery, erected after the model of those which existed in Ireland. Its very name would indicate that it belonged to that class of sacred structures which, in the early ages of Christianity, were called "houses of illumination." This fact, however, escaped the observation of both Mabillon and Petrie.

The peculiar feature of the four windows in the Round Towers facing the cardinal points, has been a complete puzzle to Irish antiquaries. Whether they adopted the Pagan theory of their origin, or the Christian, this point was to them a mystery which they could not attempt to explain. Even the sacred emblems on the towers, such as the inscribed cross, or the figure of the crucifixion above the door-way, presented most untoward difficulties to almost every system. The advocates of the Pagan origin were obliged to imagine that these emblems were the production of the chisel of some monks of the middle ages, who, for some object not known, endeavoured to give a Christian character to these old structures. Nor was the theory of the Christian origin without its difficulty in the matter. It was natural enough that an inscribed cross, or the figure of the Crucifixion, should be over the door of a church;

but why should it appear on a structure which was a sort of fortress, a belfry, a beacon, or a store-house? The sacred emblems are not out of place in the true theory. In the sacred structure of the baptistery, which was the entrance to the church and its privileges, and in which persons received the first and most important of the sacraments of Christianity, they were quite appropriate. The baptistery of the present day, too, both in the Western and Eastern Churches, has generally the cross inscribed or placed upon it. In most cases a small stone cross, says Petrie, surmounted the conical head of the Round Tower. This is a striking analogy.

It has been remarked, that in places where lime-stone abounds, and was at all times easily procured for building purposes, the Round Towers are constructed of brown stone, which must have been brought from a great distance, with much toil and trouble. This is the case with respect to Cloyne, Cashel, and other localities. What was the cause of this? No light is thrown upon it by those who have written on the Towers. Some enthusiastic advocates of the fire-worship have ventured the opinion that the brown stone was selected as being better able to resist the action of fire. But, unfortunately for them, the Round Towers are found to be built of limestone in places where the limestone is of a dark or black colour. The true theory sufficiently

explains the matter. The reed-house should approximate as near as possible to the natural colour of the living reed. The perfect Round Tower, when viewed at a distance in the valley or on the hill's side, appears like a gigantic reed in the midst and above the trees by which it is surrounded. This would not be the case, if the external walls were composed of a light or white-coloured limestone; and thus the dark stone is selected for the purpose.

The plainest tower follows the model of the reed. In some of these structures, features have been introduced by the skill and taste of the builders, to make the likeness still more perfect. Thus the different stories are sometimes externally marked by off-sets, or by bands which were, undoubtedly, intended to imitate the knots on the body or stalk of the natural reed. The Round Tower of Ardmore presents a beautiful specimen of this kind. There is at Kilmacduach a bending tower which hangs seventeen feet from the perpendicular. Tradition says that it was built by the famous Irish architect named Goban Saor. The hanging feature, strange as it may appear, certainly entered into the original design; and by it, in all probability, was intended to be represented the reed bending with the wind, an expressive emblem of St. John the Baptist. The bold design, surely, would have been worthy of the genius of Goban, and the many ages of rain

and storm, which have passed over that remarkable structure, are a convincing proof of the correct calculation and skill of the architect. Some of the towers have been raised very high, to make them the more striking and impressive. The peculiarities of the ancient baptisteries of other lands consisted in their being round, in their being of a striking or imposing size and height, and in their being placed at a short distance from the walls of the churches. These features are fully represented in the reed-house.

Two kinds of the very remarkable large reeds with conical heads, which served as models for the towers, are to be found in Ireland. The one has several knots and joints on the stalk. This would be the model for the Round Towers which have off-sets or bands on the external surface of the walls. The other has a clean, smooth stalk, and would be the model for the towers exhibiting a smooth and even surface. This latter reed is the more common, and so is the reed-house, or Round Tower, which follows it as a model. Both reeds exhibit the same outlines, being tall, graceful, and tapering up to the conical heads. On the borders of slimy lakes and sluggish rivers, these reeds grow to a great height: in dry soils they are short and stunted.

It is a curious fact that one kind of these reeds, namely, the knotted, has, at the lower joints or

knots, a film, or bag, which holds and retains a considerable quantity of water, even in very dry weather. Was that peculiar feature, too, considered and taken into account by those who selected it as a model for the reed-house which was to contain the water of baptism? The coincidence, at all events, is very suggestive and curious. The notice of the writer was first attracted to this reed by its striking appearance as it grew on the side of the cliff between Carlisle Fort and the Light House, on the harbour of Queenstown. There it was, with its graceful stalk, its knots, and its conical head, a perfect model of that beautiful Cuilceach, or Reed-house, which had been often seen and examined near the sea-shore at Ardmore. The tourist, or the traveller, often cuts down one of these reeds to convert it into a walking cane, and little thinks that what he carries under his arm was the original model of the famous Round Tower of Ireland.

In general the reed-house, or Round Tower, is found standing alone, and single. But some few places in Ireland, such as Clonmicnois, Glendalough, Ferbane, Roscrea, and Sligo, have been distinguished by the presence of two of these ancient structures. Possibly there were in each of these places, at one time, a bishop and a mitred abbot, to whose churches these towers belonged. Or, the multitudes of people who came there at Easter and Pentecost for baptism were

so great that one baptistery would have been insufficient. In this case, one reed-house would have been assigned to the men and another to the women, while, where there was only one tower, certain days were appointed for each. In no place were more than two reed-houses.

In a few places have been found mere stumps of Round Towers, which, manifestly, were never raised higher than the first or second story. These contained only the baptistery, which was destitute of its emblematical superstructure. It is likely that they were used for the purposes of baptism, just as an unfinished or imperfect church is sometimes used for the celebration of the sacred mysteries. A temporary covering of boards or shingles could have been placed on them for the purpose. The original design of carrying them to the proper height might have been prevented by war, by want of means, or, perhaps, by their near approach to the time when these structures were getting out of use, that is, as the ancient Christian writers tell us, about the end of the sixth, or beginning of the seventh century.

The Round Tower, or reed-house, is found in connection with only a very ancient Episcopal church. The very old sees, and the very old monasteries, or rather the churches of the old monasteries, where mitred abbots resided, had their reed-houses, while those of a later date are found to have been without them. This is

easily accounted for. About the end of the sixth century the baptismal fonts commenced to be placed in the interior of the churches, and the large baptisteries outside gradually went out of use. In most of the countries of the East at that period, the great body of the adult population had been baptized, and the fonts in the churches answered sufficiently well for the of baptism of infants even by immersion. In the West about that time, or a little later, baptism by infusion began generally to be administered both to the old and the young. Hence there was no necessity for the large old baptisteries outside the churches, and they went gradually out of use. Perhaps, they were continued in Ireland to a comparatively later period; but the fact of their use and origin having been involved in darkness and mystery in the twelfth century, proves that they had then long been disused, and that probably baptisms had not been performed in them for four hundred years. The incursions of the northern pirates, the extinction of learning, the suppression of the schools, the destruction of the churches, and the general confusion, caused their use and origin to be entirely forgotten.

In some instances, a diminutive or miniature Round Tower is found standing within the walls of an old church. It is generally placed inside, at the West end, near the door, and the top of

it rose many feet above the roof. Only a few specimens of these structures, which were probably at one time very numerous, now remain. What were they? The advocates of no former theory on the Round Towers have been able to venture a probable opinion. These were baptisteries. When the large old towers were disused, and the ceremony of baptism was transferred to the churches, becoming structures, or places, were erected in them to contain the baptismal font. In most instances four slight walls, or perhaps a partition of boards, were made to answer for the purpose. But where artistic or antiquarian taste prevailed, the baptistery was made to assume the form of the reed-house, and thus exhibit the ancient expressive emblem. In these the door is on a level with the ground, and not high up, as in the old towers, because they were surrounded by the walls of the church, and there was now no longer any necessity for the precaution or privacy required at a former time, when adults were baptized by immersion. It is here seen with what admirable exactness even these remote details are explained by the true theory of the reed-house.

It has been already observed that the architecture of the Round Towers resembled, in many features, that of the ancient churches of Ireland. The heads of the door-ways and side windows of the old churches were sometimes square,

sometimes angular, and sometimes semicircular. The same is the case with respect to the Round Towers, and it is likely that each reed-house corresponded in these features with the original old church near which it was erected.

The Round Tower, or reed-house, was truly an emblematic structure. That of Keneigh, which has been already noticed, will serve as an illustration. The three steps, or receding off-sets, of solid rock and circular masonry, which constituted the foundation of the tower, were, like those of the gigantic baptistery of Pisa in Italy, emblematical of the Holy Trinity, in whose name baptism is administered. The remarkable triangular figure, or window, over the door in some of the towers, was also an emblem of the Holy Trinity. The elevated door looking towards the door of the church, with the entire group of buildings, represented that which was uttered by Jacob, after seeing the vision of the mysterious ladder: "This is no other than the house of God and the gate of heaven." And, probably, it was intended even to emphasize this figure by the great elevation to which the door was, in many instances, raised. The descent into the lower compartment of the tower, the place of the baptismal font, where there was no window nor aperture for light, was, in a manner, an entrance to the grave, and represented that which Saint Paul says in

his Epistle to the Romans: "We, who are baptized in Christ Jesus, are baptized in his death: for we are buried together with him by baptism into death." The ascent from that lower compartment again, after the baptism received there, was an expressive symbol of regeneration and a new life. The hexagonal figure of the lower compartment in this particular tower, was, as in the symbolic baptisteries of the early Christians in other countries, an emblem of the manifold gifts of the Holy Ghost and of His sanctifying graces. The high and imposing superstructure, terminating in a cone, was an expressive index pointing to heaven; while the entire building, or reed-house, was an emblem of Saint John the Baptist, the recognised patron and prototype of the early Christian baptistery. And if, as it is likely, light was placed at night in the four uppermost windows, facing the cardinal points, the reed-house would be alternately a symbol of the pillar of cloud and of the pillar of fire that conducted the Israelites through the wilderness on their journey to the land of promise. The cross on the door-head and on the top, and the figure of Saint John with the cup and lamb, as on the Round Tower of Brechin, would, of course, impart additional emblematical features to the reed-house.

The arrangement in the reed-house, which comprised and necessitated a descent to the

font in a lower compartment, throws an important light on an old baptismal rubric, which has hitherto appeared obscure and unintelligible. A short preliminary notice of the ancient Irish literary relic, or liturgical fragment, in which this rubric is found, will not be out of place here. There is at present in the possession of Lord Ashburnham in England, an ancient Manuscript Missal, which at one time belonged to a church or monastery in Ireland. According to the opinion of Dr. O'Connor, Dr. Todd, and other antiquaries, who have examined this manuscript, its production cannot be assigned to a later period than the fifth century. It is encased in a stout oaken box, richly ornamented with silver plates. On this case are inscriptions in Irish bearing the names of several donors or repairers, among whom are *Donnchadh*, son of Brian, King of Ireland, and *Mac-Raith-Hu-Dunnchadha*, King of Cashel, who both lived in the beginning of the eleventh century. From this it appears that, even at that early period, the manuscript was an old and precious relic, on which kings and princes were anxious to bestow their valuable gifts, with a view to preserve it from the corroding hand of time. The name of the original scribe or writer of the manuscript, which is attached to the end of the Gospel of St. John, in Ogham characters, representing the word, *Sonid*, throws no light on the age or period at which it was produced, as

this *Sonid*, who was, probably, a distinguished scholar in his own time, is now utterly unknown.

The manuscript has got the name of the Stowe Missal, as it formed one of the valuable collection of manuscripts for a long time preserved at that place. It is written on vellum, in an ancient Lombardic character, and in the Latin language. Besides the *Ordo Missæ*, or the Order of the Mass, the Missal contains the Gospel of St. John, and other portions of the New Testament. Some of the rubrics, or directions for the priest at Mass, are in the Irish language.

With this Manuscript Missal is combined a Ritual of Baptism, exhibiting the same style of writing and material, and equal evidences of great antiquity. The *Ordo Baptismi*, or Order of Baptism, commences at page 70 of the manuscript, and occupies forty-one additional pages. Here is found the rubric on which the descent into the under compartment of the Round Tower or reed-house throws a remarkable light.

After the exorcisms, the introductory prayers, and the questions asked and answered on the principal articles of faith, the priest is directed to descend with the catechumen into the font. The words of the rubric are, *descendit in fontem*, "he descends into the fountain." What is the meaning of these words? The writer of a clever article in a late number of the *Irish Ecclesiastical Record* says, "Some have supposed that these

words imply that the priest himself entered the fountain with the person who was about to receive baptism; but without further proof we cannot accept this as the meaning of the rubric." That the priest should go into the font appeared incongruous and unnatural to this writer; and yet he was unable to offer or supply a better explanation of the rubric himself. The descent into the lower compartment of the reed-house, where the baptismal font was placed, explains it most satisfactorily. "He descends into the fountain," that is, he goes down to the compartment where the font was, and which from that circumstance received the general name of the fountain. It appears that all the preliminary prayers and ceremonies, and also the concluding ones, took place above on the door-flooring, and that they descended into the lower compartment merely for the purpose of the baptism-immersion. A writer contemporary with St. Ambrose, in the fourth century, speaking of the practice of the Church of Milan, which, also, had its separate or distinct baptistery, says, addressing himself to the newly-baptized person, "Thou hast ascended from the font; what followed? You have heard the lecture or instruction: the priest has girded himself, and washed your feet." *Ascendisti de fonte; quid secutum est? Audisti lectionem; succinctus est sacerdos: pedes tibi lavit.* Here this writer states that the concluding ceremonies after the

immersion took place above; and it is inferred from the Irish Manuscript Ritual, that it was only after the preliminary prayers they descended to the fountain. This arrangement was both natural and convenient. It permitted the baptism or immersion of the adult persons to proceed without interruption, and, also, secured for them the privacy and propriety required in the circumstances. It has been already stated that, in some instances, there is a large window, like a smaller door, placed over the regular door of the Round Tower. It would appear that this was intended to throw additional light from above on the place where the prayers were read, and the introductory and concluding ceremonies performed. Or, perhaps, it was for the purpose, when a large number presented themselves for baptism, of conducting a second separate service for them in the upper story.

The ceremony of washing the feet of the newly-baptised, of which there is mention in connection with the church of Milan, is also prescribed in this ancient Manuscript Ritual of Ireland. This practice prevailed at an early period in many of the churches of Italy, of Gaul, of Spain, and of Africa. It was not practised in Rome. It was a ceremony intended to inculcate charity and humility after the example of our Saviour. On those, the rich and the poor, who came to the same place to be

baptised, to go through the same ceremonies, and use the same font, it, most likely, exercised an humbling and conciliating effect. In some instances, popular ignorance attached undue importance to the ceremony; and it is stated that at a council held at Elvira, in Spain, at a very early period, as some say, about the year 300, it was ordered to be discontinued, lest it should be regarded as a distinct sacrament, or as an essential part of baptism.

This Manuscript Ritual of Ireland, which prescribes it, must have been used at a time when Paganism still prevailed in the land, for it contains a prayer of thanksgiving to God for having rescued the newly baptised person from the errors of the Gentiles. *Quem liberasti de errore Gentilium*—"whom Thou hast freed from the error of the Gentiles." In the Missal there is, also, in the Canon of the Mass, a prayer imploring God to guard the persons whom it commemorates against the Pagan errors. The following is the translation of the Latin text:—"We beseech, O Lord, that mercifully thou wouldst receive this tribute of our duty of the church, and of all thy people, which we offer in honour of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in commemoration of thy blessed martyrs, in this church, which thy servant erected unto the honour of thy name and glory, and that thou wouldst deliver him and all the people from the

worship of idols, and convert them to the Lord, the Father Omnipotent."

Here are most striking evidences of the great antiquity of these Liturgical fragments. The Manuscript must be a copy of the very first Missal, and of the very first Baptismal Ritual used in Ireland. And it is the only copy of them now remaining. Apparently, all the early churches of the land were provided with similar copies; but these have all perished in the lapse of ages. This manuscript is, by the inscriptions and names on the cover, traced to the country of Ormond; and it is believed that it originally belonged to some church or monastery in that ancient district. Probably, it was used at baptism in the fine Round Tower of Roscrea, which still stands there, after having braved the storms of ages. At all events, it is curious that it should, if the present theory holds, come again into connexion with the reed-house, after having lost its acquaintance for a thousand years.

Not only in a religious, but, also, in a national and antiquarian view, is the Round Tower, or reed-house, of Ireland highly interesting. It is an expressive and unmistakable monument of the early Christian civilization of this country. The ancient Christian writers, in treating of the institutions and manners of the early Christians in the East, tell us that the large, round, high,

isolated baptisteries belonged to the very first ages of Christianity, and that they went out of use about the beginning of the seventh century. For the most part, these ancient structures have disappeared under the combined influence of time, and of the ravages of the Moslem and of the barbarian, to such a degree, that it is only from the works of ancient writers their existence, use, and peculiar features can be now collected. But in Ireland there are still standing many specimens of these structures of the early Christians, which, while they tell the long tale of time, bear unerring witness to the high origin of Christianity in the country. They are interesting memorials of our early saints, for by them they were designed and erected; and they are, also, expressive monuments of the faith, for they performed an important part in baptizing and Christianizing ancient Ireland. They are now time-worn and neglected—those ancient structures, which were instrumental in bringing the Druid and the Pagan to the true faith, and which witnessed the arrival and departure of many a generation of the students, native and foreign, who flocked to the far-famed schools of Erin. Will the time ever arrive which shall behold the hand of restoration counteracting the work of decay and of destruction, and placing once more their old conical heads on these, perhaps, the most interesting monuments of early Christianity in the world?

It has been remarked, by even those who have failed to discover the true theory of the Round Towers, that the architecture and masonry of these structures would appear to be of Eastern style and origin. This observation is, probably, correct. In treating of the ancient churches of Ireland, it was observed that these edifices very much resemble the old churches of Greece and other places in the East. The old churches of Palestine, Asia-Minor, and Greece consisted of a nave and chancel, and so did the old churches of Ireland. The churches of the East were always built east and west, with the altar in the east gable. It was the same in Ireland, while in the Western church they faced indifferently any point of the heavens. The various names, which are given to the churches in Irish, are, for the most part, Celtic representatives of the names bestowed on them in the East, and, especially, in the Greek-speaking countries. The appellation of large and small churches prevailed in the East, and so did it in Ireland, as the frequent use of *cill-mor* and *cill-beg* fully testifies. In the East the mystical number of seven churches in one place had its origin, and became very frequent. Many places in Ireland, too, had their seven churches. The Cyclopean architecture of the ancient Irish churches and of many of the towers resembles also the Eastern pattern. What is to be inferred

from this? That, in all probability, the first Christian missionaries who visited Ireland had come from the East, and that they planted the Eastern customs in the country. The baptistery, or house of illumination, was very much in use in the East; and so, the reed-house says, it was in Ireland, far beyond any of the other countries of the West. Even the ancient name of the Mass in Ireland is different from that of all the other Western countries. With these it is some variation of the word *Missa*, while in Ireland it is, and always has been, *Afrion*, or *Afrionn-de*, a word which is fully explained in the chapter on the ancient churches, and which means "the very true Lamb of God." In the matter of clerical tonsure, and in the computation of the time of Easter, there were also some peculiarities among the ancient Irish. It is well known that a frequent mercantile intercourse existed between Ireland and the East, in early Christian, and, even, in Druidical times. From that East might not, at an early period, have been wafted to this country a seedling of the faith which took slow but sure root, and was brought to full growth and perfection under the care and culture of subsequent missionaries? Ireland, which was beyond the power and the persecution of the Roman Empire, was, probably, in this way, one of the first countries of the reed-house, or of the ancient Christian baptistery. It,

certainly, can exhibit it in greater strength to-day than any other land.

How wonderfully tenacious of truth is tradition! While learned theories were giving up these structures to the Druids and to the fire-worship, a universal living tradition among the people asserted, and still asserts, that they were erected by the "old saints." For what purpose, however, they were erected, that tradition candidly confessed it could not tell. An old legend, which says that each of them was built in one night by the local saint, and that it would have been raised to the heavens, if it had not been for the interference of a woman, was, probably, a simple allegory of some hidden fact, or, perhaps, in some way, expressive of the mist and darkness in which their original use was involved. At all times they have been objects of much popular curiosity, as well as of historical and antiquarian interest. They are now, as the writer believes, incontestably claimed for the "old saints" and their churches, and connected with an ancient Christian use and practice which will not fail to commend them still more to the respectful attention of the country and its people.

THE END.